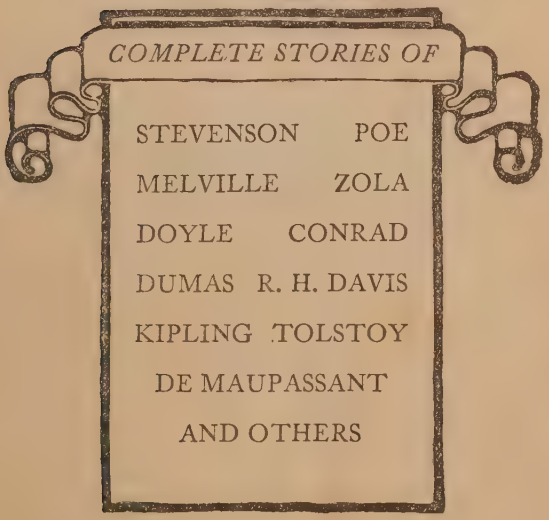
DISCARD

THE *Omnibus* OF ADVENTURE

THE BRIG WAS IN THE HANDS OF THE SPANIARDS
from "BLOW UP WITH THE BRIG" *By* WILKIE COLLINS

THE *Omnibus* OF ADVENTURE

Edited by JOHN GROVE



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"In anything fit to be called by the name of reading, the process itself should be absorbing and voluptuous; we should gloat over a book, be rapt clean out of ourselves . . ."

—Robert Louis Stevenson.

Foreword

This book professes to be of some permanent entertainment value. I think that the true lover of adventure fiction likes best of all those stories which continue to weave their spell long after their first reading. Such striking pictures of their scenes and of their characters in action come flashing and re-flashing before the mind's eye, that the tales can be pulled down from the shelf from time to time and enjoyed again and again.

So the purpose of this collection of forty-four complete stories is more than to afford first thrills over the strange happenings of which they tell. It is to furnish a large treasury of adventure tales so effectively, so artistically wrought, that the book can be drawn upon again and again for delightful and absorbing escape. And this, many will agree, only the master story-tellers can give us—and then only in their tales of action.

In each of these novelettes, tales and short-stories, the spirit of adventure is embodied. The individual ventures forth and encounters—the unexpected. Things happen to him. The realms and the times invaded are many and varied. Here are tales of adventure tragic and moving; adventures gay, roystering and swashbuckling; on land, on sea, in the tropics, in Siberian wilderness, in dense metropolis, on lonely island. Here are also adventures in the shadowy realm, as in the *Intersignum* from the *Sardonic Tales* of Villiers de l'Isle-Adam. Here, too, and for the first time, I think, in any collection, is Herman Melville's *Hunilla*, the lonely castaway of Norfolk Isle, haunting in pathos; and her cousin-germane in fiction, poor sweet *Laurette* of de Vigny's superb story of the French Revolution.

It may be as surprising to the reader as it has been to the editor of this volume to recognize that many of the unforgettable adventure tales have come from authors more widely known for literature of another kind. One does not think of de Vigny, Korolenko, Pushkin, Tolstoy, Zola as writers of adventure thrillers. Yet their stories, I think, will

ride the reader into the land of excitement as surely as the tales of Conrad, Stevenson, Kipling, Clark Russell, Conan Doyle and the dozens of others in the book.

For variety and contrast the stories may well be read in the order in which they appear.

JOHN GROVE.

NEW YORK,
AUGUST, 1930.

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THE *Omnibus* OF ADVENTURE

The Extraordinary Adventure of a Chief Mate

BY W. CLARK RUSSELL

(*1844-1911*)

In the newspapers of 1876 appeared the following extracts from the log of a merchantman:

"Volcanic Island in the North Atlantic.—The ship *Hercules*, of Liverpool, lately arrived in the Mersey, reports as follows: March 23, in 2° 12′ north latitude, 33° 27′ west longitude, a shock of earthquake was felt, and shortly afterward a mass of land was hove up at a distance of about two miles from the ship. Michael Balfour, the chief officer, fell overboard. A buoy was thrown to him, the ship brought to the wind, and a boat lowered within fifteen minutes of the occurrence. But though the men sought the chief mate for some time, nothing could be seen of him, and it is supposed that he sank shortly after falling into the sea. Masters of vessels are recommended to keep a sharp lookout in approaching the situation of the new island as given above. No doubt it will be sighted by other ships, and duly reported."

I am Michael Balfour; I it was who fell overboard; and it is needless for me to say here that I was *not* drowned. The volcanic island was only reported by one other ship, and the reason why will be read at large in this account of my strange adventure and merciful deliverance.

It was the evening of the 23d of March, 1876. Our passage to the equator from Sydney had been good, but for three days we had been bothered with light head winds and calms, and since four o'clock this day the ocean had stretched in oil-smooth undulations to its margin, with never a sigh of air to crispen its marvellous serenity into shadow. The courses were hauled up, the staysails down, the mizzen brailed up; the canvas delicately beat the masts to the soft swing of the tall spars,

and sent a small rippling thunder through the still air, like a roll of drums heard at a distance. The heat was great; I had never remembered a more biting sun. The pitch in the seams was soft as putty, the atmosphere was full of the smell of blistered paint, and it was like putting your hand on a red-hot stove to touch the binnacle hood or grasp for an instant an iron belaying-pin.

A sort of loathing comes into a man with a calm like this. "The very deep did rot," says the poet; and you understood his fancy when you marked the blind heave of the swell to the sun standing in the midst of a sky of brass, with his wake under him sinking in a sinuous dazzle, as though it was his fiery glance piercing to the green depths a thousand fathoms deep. It was hot enough to slacken the nerves and give the imagination a longer scope than sanity would have it ride by. That was why, perhaps, I found something awful and forbidding in the sunset, though at another time it might scarcely have detained my gaze a minute. But it is true, nevertheless, that others besides me gaped at the wonderful gushings of hot purple,—arrested whirlpools of crimson haze, they looked,—in the heart of which the orb sat rayless, flooding the sea with blood under him, so magnificently fell was the hue, and flushing the sky with twenty dyes of gold and orange, till, in the far east, the radiance fainted into the delicacy of pale amber.

"Yon's a sunset," said Captain Matthews, a North of England man, to me, "to make a fellow think of the last day."

"I'm looking at it, sir," said I, "as though I had never seen a sunset before. That's the oddest part of it, to my mind. There's fire enough there to eat a gale up. How should a cat's-paw crawl then?" And I softly whistled, while he wetted his finger and held it up; but to no purpose; the draught was all between the rails, and they blew forward and aft with every swing of the sails.

When the dusk came along, the silence upon the sea was something to put all sorts of moods into a man. The sky was a hovering velvet stretch of stars, with a young moon lying curled among them, and winkings of delicate violet sheet-lightning down in the southwest, as though some gigantic-tinted lantern, passing, flung its light upon the dark blue obscure there. The captain went below, after a long, impatient look round, and I overhung the rail, peering into the water alongside, or sending my gaze into the frightful distance, where the low-lying stars hung. With every soft dip of the ship's side to the slant of

the dark folds, there shot forth puffs of cloudy phosphor, intermixed with a sparkling of sharper fires now and again, blue, yellow, and green, like worms of flame striking out of their cocoons of misty radiance. The noise of the canvas on high resembled the stirring of pinions, and the cheep of a block, the grind of a parrel, helped the illusion, as though the sounds were the voices of huge birds restlessly beating their pinions aloft.

Presently the man at the wheel startled me with an observation. I went to him, and he pointed upward with a long, shadowy arm. I looked, and saw a corposant, as it is called at sea,—a St. Elmo's fire,—burning at the end of the crossjack-yard. The yard lay square, and the polished sea beneath gave back the reflection so clearly that the mystic fire lay like a huge glow-worm on the black mirror.

"There should be wind not far off," said the helmsman, in a subdued voice; for few sailors can see one of these lights without a stirring of their superstitious instincts, and this particular exhalation hung close to us.

"I hope so," said I, "though I don't know where it's to come from."

As I spoke, the light vanished. I ran my eye over the yards, expecting its reappearance; but it returned no more, and the sails rose pale and phantom-like to the stars. I was in an odd humour, and this was an apparition not to brighten one up. Of course one knows all about these marine corpse-candles, and can explain their nature; but nevertheless the sudden kindling of them upon the darkness of the night, in the dead hush of the calm or amid the fury of the shrieking hurricane, produces feelings which there is nothing in science to resolve. I could have laughed to find myself sending a half-awed look aloft, as if I expected to see some visionary hand at work upon another one of these graveyard illuminations—with a stealing out of some large, sad face to the melancholy glow; but I returned to the side very pensive for all that, and there stood watching the fiery outline of a shark subtly sneaking close to the surface (insomuch that the wake of its fin slipped away in little coils of green flame) toward the ship's bows.

Half an hour later the dark curl of a light air of wind shattered the starlight in the sea, and our canvas fell asleep. I called to the watch to trim sail, and in a few moments the decks were busy with the figures of men pulling and hauling and surging out at the ropes in sulky, slumberous growlings. The captain arrived.

"Little worth having in this, I fear," said he. "But make the most of it—make the most of it. Get the foretopmast stunsail run up. If she creeps but a league, it is a league to the good."

The sail was sleepily set. Humbugging about with stunsails to the cat's-paws little pleased the men, especially at night. For three days they had been boxhauling the yards about to no purpose, and it was sickening work running stunsail-booms out to airs that died in their struggles to reach us. However, here was a draught at last, and the old gurgling and moaning sounds of the breathless, sluggish swell washing heavily like liquid lead to the sides were replaced by the tinkling noises of waters parting at the bows with a pretty little seething of expiring foam, and the hiss of exploding froth-bells. At eleven o'clock the light breeze was still holding, and the ship was floating softly through the dusk, the paring of moon swaying like a silver sickle over the port mizzen topsail yard-arm, everything quiet along the decks, no light save the sheen from the lamps in the binnacle, and nothing stirring but the figure of a man on the forecastle pacing athwartships, and blotting out at every step a handful of the stars which lay like dust on the blackness, under the yawn of the forecourse. On a sudden a steamer's lights showed on the starboard bow—a green beam, and a yellow one above, with the water on fire beneath them, and sparks floating away upon her coil of smoke, that made you think of the spangles of a falling rocket. She went past swiftly, at no great distance from us. There was not a moan in the hot breeze to disturb the wonderful ocean stillness, and you almost thought you caught the beating of the iron heart in her, and the curious monotonous songs which engines sing as they work. She swept past like a phantom, running a line of illuminated windows along which resembled a row of street-lamps out in the darkness; and as she came on to our quarter she struck seven bells (half-past eleven), the rich metallic notes of which I clearly heard; and with the trembling of the last stroke upon the ear her outline melted.

At that instant a peculiar thrill ran through the ship. It may be likened to the trembling in a floor when a heavy waggon passes in the street outside. It was over in a breath, but I could have sworn that it was not my fancy. I walked aft to the wheel, and said to the man, "Did you notice anything just now?"

"Seemed to me as if the vessel trembled like," he replied.

As he spoke the ship shook again, this time strongly. It was something more than a shudder; the sensation was for all the world as though she had scraped over a shoal of rock or shingle. There was a little clatter below, a noise of broken glass. The watch, who had been dozing on deck, sprang to their feet, and their ejaculations of surprise and fear rolled in a growl among them. The captain ran out of the companionway in his shirt and trousers.

"What was that, Mr. Balfour?" he bawled.

"Either the shock of an earthquake," said I, "or a whale sliding along our keel."

"Get a cast of the lead! get a cast of the lead!" he shouted.

This was done to the full scope of the hand-line, without bottom, of course. By this time the watch below had tumbled up, and all hands were now on deck, staring aloft or over the side, sniffing, spitting, muttering, and wondering what had happened.

"There's that bloomin' compreesant come again!" exclaimed a hoarse voice; and, sure enough, a light similar to the one that had hung at the crossjack yard-arm now floated upon the end of the upper main-topsail-yard.

"The devil's abroad tonight!" exclaimed the captain. "There's sulphur enough about," and he fell a-snuffling.

What followed might have made an infidel suppose so; for scarce were the words out of his mouth when there happened an astonishing blast of noise, as loud and violent as that of forty or fifty cannons fired off at once, and out of the black sea no farther than a mile broad on the starboard beam rose a pillar of fire, crimson as the light of the setting sun and as dazzling too; it lived while you might have counted twenty, but in that time it lighted up the sea for leagues and leagues, put out the stars, and made the sky resemble a canopy of yellow satin; we on the ship saw one another's faces as if by daylight; the shrouds and masts and our own figures cast jet-black shadows on the deck; the whole ship flashed out to that amazing radiance like a fabric sun-touched. The column of fire then flattened and disappeared, and the night rolled down upon our blinded eyes as black as thunder.

There was no noise—no hissing as of boiling water. If the furious report that preceded the leap of the fire had rendered its coming terrible, its extinction was made not less awful by the tomb-like stillness that attended it. I sprang on to the rail, believing I could perceive a

dark mass—like a deeper dye upon the blackness that way—upon the water, and to steady myself caught hold of the mizzen loyal backstay swinging out to my arm's length and peering with all my might. My excitement was great, and the consternation that possessed the ship's crew was upon me. As I leaned, the vessel heeled violently to a large swell caused by the volcanic disturbances. The roll was extraordinarily severe, heaving the vessel down to her covering-board; and the great hill of water running silent and in darkness through the sea, so that it could neither be viewed nor heard, made the sickening lurch a dreadful surprise and wonder.

It was in that moment that I fell overboard. I suppose my grip of the backstay relaxed when the ship lay down; but, let the thing have happened how it would, in a breath I was under water. It is said that the swiftness of thought is best shown by dreams. This may be so; yet I cannot believe that thought was ever swifter in a dream than it was in me ere I came to the surface; for in those few seconds I gathered exactly what had befallen me, wondered whether my fall had been seen, whether I should be saved, realised my hopeless condition if I had not been observed, and, above all, was thinking steadfastly and with horror of the shark I had not long ago watched stemming in fire past the ship. I was a very indifferent swimmer, and what little power I had in that way was like to be paralysed by thoughts of the shark. I rose and fetched a breath, shook the water out of my eyes, and looked for the ship. She had been sliding along at the rate of about four knots an hour; but had she been sailing at ten she could not seem to have gone farther from me during the brief while I was submerged. From the edge of the water, where my eyes were, she appeared a towering pale shadow about a mile off. I endeavoured to scream out; but whether the cold of the plunge had bereft me of my voice, or that I had swallowed water enough to stop my pipes, I found I could utter nothing louder than a small groan. I made several strokes with my arms, and suddenly spied a life-buoy floating almost twenty yards ahead of me. I made for it in a transport of joy, for the sight of it was all the assurance I could ask that they knew on the ship that I had tumbled overboard; and, coming to the buoy, I seized and threw it over my head, and then got it under my arms and so floated.

The breeze, such as it was, was on the ship's quarter, and she would need to describe a considerable arc before she rounded to. I could hear

ery faintly the voices on board, the flinging down of coils of rope, the im echoes of hurry and commotion. I again sought to exert my lungs, ut could deliver no louder note than a moan. The agony of mind I as under lest a shark should seize me I cannot express, and my trained eyeballs would come from the tall shadow of the ship to the ea about me in a wild searching of the liquid ebony of it for the parkling configuration of the most abhorred of all fish. I could have worn that hours elapsed before they lowered a boat from the ship, that eemed to grow fainter and fainter every time I looked at her, so swal- owing is the character of ocean darkness, and so subtle apparently, o fleet in fact, the settling away of a fabric under canvas from an bject stationary on the water. I could distinctly hear the rattle of he oars in the rowlocks, and the splash of the dipped blades, but ould not discern the boat. It was speedily evident, however, that they vere pulling wide of me; my ear could not mistake. Again I tried to hout, but to no purpose. Manifestly no one had thought of taking my bearings when I fell, and I, who lay south, was being sought for south- vest.

Time passed; the boat never approached me within a quarter of a nile. They must instantly have heard me, could I have halloed; but ny throat refused its office. I reckoned that they continued to row here and there for about half an hour, during which they were several imes hailed by the captain, as I supposed; the sound of the oars then lied. A little later I heard the very faint noises made by their hoisting he boat and hauling in upon the braces, and then there was nothing for ne to do but to watch, with dying eyes, the shadow of the ship till it aded, and the stars shone where she had been.

The sky shed very little light, and there was no foam to cast an llumination of its own. However, by this time, as you will suppose, I was used to my situation; that is to say, the horror and novelty of ny condition had abated, and settled into a miserable feeling of despair; so that I was like a dying man who had passed days in an open boat, nd who languidly directs his eyes over the gunwale at the sea, with he hopelessness that is bred by familiarity with his dreadful posture. It was some time after the ship had melted into the airy dusk that I seemed to notice, for the first time since I had been in the life-buoy, the ump of blackness at which I had been straining my eyes when the vessel heeled and I fell. It had the elusiveness of a light at sea, that is

best seen (at a distance) by gazing a little on one side of it. It lay, a black mass, and whether it was a vast huddle of weeds, or a great whale killed by the earthquake, or solid land uphove by the volcanic rupture, was not conjecturable. It hung, still and not very tall, for I could not see that it put out any stars, and was about a mile distant. Whatever it might prove, I could not be worse off near or on or amid it than I was here; so, setting my face toward it, I began to strike out with my legs and arms.

The water was so fiery, it chipped in flashes to every blow of my hands. I swam in the utmost terror, never knowing but that the next moment I should be feeling the teeth of a shark upon my legs, for the sparkling of the sea to my kicks and motions was signal enough for such a beast if it was a league distant; but I may as well say here that there is no doubt the shock of earthquake and the flame effectually cleared the sea in its neighbourhood of every kind of fish that floated in it, though the hope of such a thing could yield me but very little comfort while I swam.

I continued to make good progress, and presently, approaching the block of blackness, for so it looked, perceived that it was certainly land, —a solid rock, in short,—the head of some mountainous submarine formation lifted ten or twelve feet above the sea. I could now discern a faintness of vapour circling up from it and showing like steam against the stars. Its front stretched a length of a few hundred feet; how far it went behind I could not tell. A small sound of creaming waters came from it, produced by the light swell washing its shelter side. It lay all in a line of grayish darkness even when I was quite close, and I could see nothing but the shapeless body of it. On a sudden my feet struck ground, and I waded thirty paces along a shelf that was under water till my paces lifted to the dry beach. But by this time I was fearfully exhausted; I could scarcely breathe. My legs and arms were numbed to the weight of lead. The atmosphere was warm, but not unbearably so—not hotter than it had been at noon in the ship. Steam crawled up from every pore, like the drainings of smoke from damp straw, but it did not add to the distress of my breathing. I made shift to stagger onward till I had gone about fifty feet from the wash of the sea. Nature then broke down; my knees gave way, I stumbled and fell—whether in a swoon or whether in a death-like slumber, I cannot say; all I can tell is that when I awoke, or recovered my senses, the sun

stood fifteen degrees above the horizon, and I opened my eyes upon a hot and dazzling sky.

I sat up in the utmost amazement. My mind for some time was all abroad, and I could recollect nothing. Memory then entered me with a bound, and I staggered to my feet with a cry. The first thing I took notice of was that my clothes were nearly dry, which was not very reconcilable with the steam that was still issuing from the island, though it was as I say. My bones ached cruelly, but I was not sensible of any particular languor. The brilliance was so blinding that I had to employ my eyes very warily in order to see; and it was not until I had kept opening and shutting them and shading them with my hands for some minutes that they acquired their old power. The island on which I stood had unquestionably been hove up in the night by the earthquake. I cannot figure it better than by asking you to imagine a gigantic mass of pumice-stone, somewhat flat on top, and shelving on all sides very gently to the water, lying afloat but steady on the sea. It was of the hue of pumice, and as clean as an egg-shell, without a grain of calcined dust or any appearance of scoriæ that I could anywhere observe. It was riddled with holes, some wide and deep—a very honeycomb; and that I did not break my neck or a limb in my staggering walk from the beach in the darkness, I must ever account the most miraculous part of my adventure.

But what (when I had my whole wits) riveted my attention, and held me staring open-mouthed, as though in good truth the apparition of the devil had arisen before me, was the body of a ship leaning on its bilge, at not more than a gunshot from where I stood, looking toward the interior. When my eyes first went to the thing I could not believe them. I imagined it some trick of the volcanic explosion that had fashioned a portion of the land or rock (as it may be called) into the likeness of a ship; but, on gazing steadfastly, I saw that it was indeed a vessel, rendered extraordinarily beautiful and wonderful by being densely covered with shells of a hundred different kinds, by which her bulk was enlarged, though her shape was preserved. Bright fountains of water were gushing from fifty places in her; all these waterfalls shone like rainbows, and showed surprisingly soft and lovely against the velvet green of the moss and the gray and kaleidoscopic tints of the shells upon her. Lost in amazement, I made my way toward her, and stood viewing her at a short distance. She had three

lower masts standing—one right in the bows, and the mizzen raking very much aft. All three masts were supported by shrouds, and that was all the rigging the sea had left. She looked to be made of shells and moss; her shrouds and masts were incrusted as thickly as her hull. She was a mere tub of a ship in shape, being scarce twice as long as she was broad, with great fat buttocks, a very tall stern narrowing atop, and low bows with a prodigious curve to the stem-head. I am not well versed in the shipping of olden times, but I would have willingly staked all I was worth in the world that the fabric before me belonged to a period not much later than the days of Columbus, and that she had been sunk at least three centuries below the sea; and it was also perfectly clear to me that she had risen in the daylight, out of her green and oozy sepulchre, with the upheaval of the bed on which she lay to the convulsion that had produced this island.

But my situation was not one to suffer me to stand long idly wondering and staring. The moment I brought my eyes away from the ship to the mighty desolation of the blue and gleaming ocean, a horror broke upon me, my heart turned into lead, and in the anguish of my spirits I involuntarily lifted my clinched hands to God. What was to become of me? I had no boat, no means of making anything to bear me, nothing but the life-buoy, that was no better than a trap for sharks to tear me to pieces in. I was thirsty, but there was no fresh water on this steaming speck of rock, and I tell you, the knowing that there was none, and that unless rain fell I must die of thirst, had like to have driven me mad. Where the ship was, and beyond it, the island rose somewhat in the form of a gentle undulation. I walked that way, and there obtained a view of the whole island, which was very nearly circular, like the head of a hill, somewhat after the shape of a saucepan lid. It resembled a great mass of sponge to the sight, and there was no break upon its surface save the incrusted ship, which did, indeed, form a very conspicuous object. Happening to look downward, I spied a large dead fish, of the size of a cod of sixteen or eighteen pounds, lying a-dry in a hole. I put my arm down and dragged it out, and, hoping by appeasing my hunger to help my thirst somewhat, I opened my knife and cut out a little raw steak, and ate it. The moisture in the flesh refreshed me, and, that the sun might not spoil the carcass, I carried it to the shadow made by the ship, and put it under one of the waterfalls that the play might keep it sweet. There was plenty more

dead fish in the numerous holes, and I picked out two and put them in the shade; but I knew that the great heat must soon taint them and rot the rest, whence would come a stench that might make the island poisonous to me.

I sat down under the bends of the ship for the shadow it threw, and gazed at the sea. Perhaps I ought to have felt grateful for the miraculous creation of this spot of land, when, but for it, I must have miserably perished in the life-buoy, dying a most dreadful, slow, tormenting death, if some shark had not quickly despatched me; but the solitude was so frightful, my doom seemed so assured, I was threatened with such dire sufferings ere my end came, that, in the madness and despair of my heart, I could have cursed the intervention of this rock, which promised nothing but the prolongation of my misery. There was but one live spark amid the ashes of my hopes; namely, that the island lay in the highway of ships, and that it was impossible a vessel could sight so unusual an object without deviating from her course to examine it. That was all the hope I had; but God knows there was nothing in it to keep me alive when I set off against it the consideration that there was no water on the island, no food; that a ship would have to sail close to remark so flat and little a point as this rock; and that days, ay, and weeks might elapse before the rim of yonder boundless surface, stretching in airy leagues of deep blue to the azure sky at the horizon, should be broken by the star-like shining of a sail.

Happily, the wondrous incrusted bulk was at hand to draw my thoughts away from my hideous condition; for I verily believe, had my eye found nothing to rest upon but the honeycombed pumice, my brain would have given way. I stood up and took a long view of the petrified shell-covered structure, feeling a sort of awe in me while I looked, for it was a kind of illustration of the saying of the sea giving up its dead, and the thing stirred me almost as though it had been a corpse that had risen to the sun, after having been a secret of the deep for three hundred years.

It occurred to me that if I could board her she might furnish me with a shelter from the dew of the night. She had channels with long plates, all looking as if they were formed of shells; and stepping round to the side toward which she leaned, I found the fore channel-plates to be within reach of my hands. The shells were slippery and cutting; but I was a sailor, and there would have been nothing in a harder climb

than this to daunt me. So, after a bit of a struggle, I succeeded in hauling myself into the chains, and thence easily dragged myself over the rail on to the deck.

The sight between the bulwarks was far more lovely and surprising than the spectacle presented by the ship's sides. For the decks seemed not only formed of shells of a hundred different hues; there was a great abundance of branching corals, white as milk, and marine plants of kinds for which I could not find names, of several brilliant colours; so that, what with the delicate velvet of the moss, the dark shades of seaweed of figurations as dainty as those of ferns, and the different sorts of shells, big and little, all lying as solid as if they had been set in concrete, the appearance of the ship submitted was something incredibly fantastic and admirable. Whether the hatches were on or not I could not tell, so thickly coated were the decks; but whether or not, the deposits and marine growths rendered the surface as impenetrable as iron, and I believe it would have kept a small army of laborers plying their pickaxes for a whole week to have made openings into the hold through that shelly coating of mail.

My eye was taken by a peculiar sort of protuberance at the foot of the mainmast. It stood as high as I did, and had something of the shape of a man, and, indeed, after staring at it for some time, I perceived that it had been a man; that is to say, it was a human skeleton, filled up to the bulk of a living being by the shells and barnacles which covered it. Ashore, it might have passed for some odd imitation in shells of the human figure; but, viewing it as I did, in the midst of that great ocean, amid the frightful solitude of the great dome of heaven, in a ship that was like the handiwork of the sea-gods at the bottom of the deep—I say, looking at it as I did, and knowing the thing had had life in centuries past, and had risen thus wildly garnished out of the unfathomable secret heart of the ocean, it awed me to an extent I cannot express, and I gazed as though fascinated. In all probability, this was a man who, when the ship foundered, had been securely lashed to the mast for safety or for punishment.

I turned away at last with a shudder, and walked aft. The wreck was unquestionably some Spanish or Portuguese carrack or galleon as old as I have stated; for you saw her shape when you stood on her deck, and her castellated stern rising into a tower from her poop and

poop-royal, as it was called, proved her age as convincingly as if the date of her launch had been scored upon her.

What was in her hold? Thousands of pounds' worth of precious ore in gold and silver bars and ingots, for all I knew; but had she been flush to her upper decks with doubloons and ducats, I would have exchanged them all for the sight of a ship, or for a rill of fresh water. I searched the horizon with feverish eyes; there was nothing in sight. The afternoon was advancing; the sun was burning unbearably midway down the western sky, and my thirst tormented me. I dropped over the side and cut another steak of fish; but though the moisture temporarily relieved me, the salt of the water flowing upon it dried into my throat and increased my sufferings. There was a light air blowing, and the sea trembled to it into a deeper hue of blue, and met in a glorious stream of twinkling rubies under the setting sun. I counted half a score of wet black fins round about the island, and understood that the sharks had recovered from their scare, and had returned to see if the earthquake had cast up anything to eat.

When the sun sank, the night came along in a stride; the curl of the moon looked wanly down upon me, and the sky flashed with starshine, so rich and magnificent was the glow of the nearer luminaries. I reentered the ship and stepped to the cabin front, over which extended a "break" or penthouse, under which I might find some shelter from the dew that was already falling like rain, and squatted down, lascar-fashion, with my back against the shell-armoured bulkhead. Great Father! never had I known what solitude was till then. There was no sound save the quiet foaming of waters draining from the wreck, and the purring of the very light swell softly moving upon the beach, and the faint, scarce audible whispering of the dew-laden draught of air stirring in the stony, fossilised shrouds. My throat felt like hot brass; I tried to pray, but could not. Imagination grew a little delirious, and I would sometimes fancy that the terrible shape at the foot of the mainmast moved as if seeking to free itself and approach me. There was a constant glancing of shooting stars on high, swift sparklings and trailings of luminous dust, and, as on the previous night, here and there upon the horizon a dim violet play of sheet-lightning. It was like being at the bottom of the sea, alive there, to be in this black, shelly, weed-smelling ship. Whether my thoughts came to me waking or sleeping I cannot tell; but I know some mad fancies possessed me,

and upon the sable canvas of the night, imagination, like a magic lantern, flung a dozen febrile-tinctured pictures, and I particularly recollect conceiving that I was my own soul at the bottom of the ocean in the ship; that, in the green twilight of the valley in which I was, I saw many forms of dead men standing or lying or sitting, preserving the postures in which they had come floating down into the darkly gleaming profound—figures of sailors of different centuries clad in the garb of their times, intermixed with old ordnance making coarse and rusty streaks upon the sand, the glitter of minted money, the gleam of jewels, and fish brightly apparelled and of shapes unknown to man floating round about like fragments of rainbow. My dreams always wound up with imaginations of babbling drinks, and then I'd wake with the froth upon my lips. However, I got some ease by leaving my handkerchief to soak in the dew and then sucking it.

Several times during the night I had got on to the upper poop—the deck above the poop anciently termed the poop-royal—and looked around me. But there was nothing to see, not a shadow to catch the eye. The breeze freshened somewhat about midnight, and the air was made pleasant by the musical noises of running waters. I fell asleep an hour before dawn, and when I awoke the early ashen line was brightening in the east. The birth of the day is rapid in those parallels, and the light of the morning was soon all over sea and sky. I turned to search the ocean, and the first thing I saw was a brig not above half a mile from the island. She had studding sails set, and was going north, creeping along before the breeze. The instant I saw her I rushed on to the poop, where my figure would be best seen, and fell to flourishing my handkerchief like a maniac. I sought to shout, but my voice was even weaker than it had been after I fell overboard. I have no power to describe my feelings while I waited to see what the brig would do. I cursed myself for not having kept a lookout, so that I might have had plenty of time to signal to her as she approached. If she abandoned me I knew I must perish, as every instant assured me that I had neither mental nor physical power to undergo another day and night without drink and without hope upon the island.

On a sudden she hauled up the lee clew of her mainsail, boom-ended her studding sails, and put her helm over. I knew what this signified, and, clasping my hands, I looked up to God.

Presently a boat was lowered and pulled toward the island. I

ropped over the side, tumbling down upon my nose in my weakness, nd made with trembling legs to the beach, standing, in my eagerness, t the very curl of the wash there. There were three men in the boat, nd they eyed me, as they rowed, over their shoulders as if I had been spectre.

"Who are you, mate, and what country is this?" exclaimed the man ho pulled stroke, standing up to stretch his hand to me.

I pointed to my throat, and gasped, "Water!" I could barely rticulate.

Nothing in this wide world moves sailors like a cry to them for ater. In an instant the three men had dragged me into the boat, and ere straining like horses at their oars, as they sent the boat flashing hrough the rippling water. We dashed alongside.

"He's dying of thirst!" was the cry.

I was bundled on deck; the captain ran below, and returned with a mall draught of wine and water.

"Start with that," said he. "You'll be fitter for a longer pull later n."

The drink gave me back my voice; yet for a while I could scarce peak, for the tears that swelled my heart.

"Are there any more of ye?" said the captain.

I answered, "No."

"But what land's this?" he inquired.

"An island uphove by an earthquake," said I.

"Great thunder!" he cried. "And what's that arrangement in shells nd weeds atop of it?"

"A vessel that's probably been three hundred years at the bottom," answered.

"The quake rose it, hey?"

"Just as it is," said I.

"Well, boil me," cried the worthy fellow, "if it don't seem too good o be true! Mr. Fletcher, trim sail, sir. Best shove along—shove along. Come, sir, step below with me for a rest and a bite, and give me your ale."

A warily eaten meal with another sup of wine and water made me a iew man. We sat below a long while, I telling my story, he making iotes and talking of the credit he would get for bringing home a report

of a new country, when suddenly the mate put his head into the sky light.

"Captain!"

"Hullo!"

"The island's gone, sir."

"What d'you mean? that we've sunk it?"

"No, by the Lord; but that it's sunk itself."

We ran on deck, and where the island should have been was al clear sea.

The captain stared at the water, with his mouth wide open.

"Nothing to report after all!" he cried.

"I saw it founder!" exclaimed the mate. "I had my eye on it when it sank. I've seen some founderings in my day; but this beats all my going a-fishing!"

"Well," said the captain to me, "we didn't come too soon, sir."

I hid my face in my hands.

The *Susan Gray* was the name of the brig that rescued me. The *Hercules* saw the first of the island, and the *Susan Gray* the last of it. Hence, as I said at the start, it was reported by two vessels only.

A Terribly Strange Bed

BY WILKIE COLLINS

(*1824-1889*)

SHORTLY after my education at college was finished, I happened to be staying at Paris with an English friend. We were both young men then, and lived, I am afraid, rather a wild life, in the delightful city of our sojourn. One night we were idling about the neighborhood of the Palais Royal, doubtful to what amusement we should next betake ourselves. My friend proposed a visit to Frascati's, but his suggestion was not to my taste. I knew Frascati's, as the French saying is, by heart; had lost and won plenty of five-franc pieces there, merely for amusement's sake, until it was amusement no longer, and was thoroughly tired, in fact, of all the ghastly respectabilities of such a social anomaly as a respectable gambling-house. "For heaven's sake," said I to my friend, "let us go somewhere where we can see a little genuine, blackguard, poverty-stricken gaming with no false gingerbread glitter thrown over it at all. Let us get away from fashionable Frascati's, to a house where they don't mind letting in a man with a ragged coat, or a man with no coat, ragged or otherwise."—"Very well," said my friend, "we needn't go out of the Palais Royal to find the sort of company you want. Here's the place just before us; as blackguard a place, by all report, as you could possibly wish to see." In another minute we arrived at the door, and entered the house.

When we got up stairs, and had left our hats and sticks with the doorkeeper, we were admitted into the chief gambling-room. We did not find many people assembled there. But, few as the men were who looked up at us on our entrance, they were all types, lamentably true types, of their respective classes.

We had come to see blackguards; but these men were something worse. There is a comic side, more or less appreciable, in all blackguardism. Here there was nothing but tragedy,—mute, weird tragedy.

The quiet in the room was horrible. The thin, haggard, long-haire young man, whose sunken eyes fiercely watched the turning-up of th cards, never spoke; the flabby, fat-faced, pimply player, who picke his piece of pasteboard perseveringly, to register how often black wor and how often red, never spoke; the dirty, wrinkled old man, wit the vulture eyes, and the darned greatcoat, who had lost his last *soz* and still looked on desperately, after he could play no longer, neve spoke. Even the voice of the croupier sounded as if it were strangel dulled and thickened in the atmosphere of the room. I had entere the place to laugh; but the spectacle before me was something to wee over. I soon found it necessary to take refuge, in excitement, fro the depression of spirits which was fast stealing on me. Unfortunatel I sought the nearest excitement by going to the table, and beginning t play. Still more unfortunately, as the event will show, I won,—wo prodigiously; won incredibly; won at such a rate, that the regula players at the table crowded round me, and staring at my stake with hungry, superstitious eyes, whispered to one another, that th English stranger was going to break the bank.

The game was *Rouge et Noir*. I had played at it in every city i Europe, without, however, the care or the wish to study the theor of chances, that philosopher's stone of all gamblers. And a gambler in the strict sense of the word, I had never been. I was heart-whol from the corroding passion for play. My gaming was a mere idl amusement. I never resorted to it by necessity, because I neve knew what it was to want money. I never practised 't so incessantl as to lose more than I could afford, or to gain more than I coul coolly pocket without being thrown off my balance by my good luck In short, I had hitherto frequented gambling-tables, just as I fre quented ball-rooms and opera-houses, because they amused me, an because I had nothing better to do with my leisure hours.

But on this occasion it was very different. Now, for the first tim in my life, I felt what the passion for play really was. My success firs bewildered, and then, in the most literal meaning of the word, intoxi cated me. Incredible as it may appear, it is nevertheless true, that only lost when I attempted to estimate chances, and played accordin to previous calculation. If I left everything to luck, and staked with out any care or consideration, I was sure to win,—to win in the fac of every recognized probability in favor of the bank. At first som

of the men present ventured their money safely enough on my color; but I speedily increased my stakes to sums which they dared not risk. One after another, they left off playing, and breathlessly looked on at my game.

Still, time after time, I staked higher and higher, and still won. The excitement in the room rose to fever pitch. The silence was interrupted by a deep, muttered chorus of oaths and exclamations in different languages, every time the gold was shovelled across to my side of the table. Even the imperturbable croupier dashed his rake on the floor in a (French) fury of astonishment at my success. But one man present preserved his self-possession; and that man was my friend. He came to my side, and, whispering in English, begged me to leave the place satisfied with what I had already gained. I must do him the justice to say that he repeated his warnings and entreaties several times; and only left me, and went away, after I had rejected his advice (I was, to all intents and purposes, gambling-drunk) in terms which rendered it impossible for him to address me again that night.

Shortly after he had gone, a hoarse voice behind me cried, "Permit me, my dear sir, permit me to restore to their proper place two Napoleons which you have dropped. Wonderful luck, sir! I pledge you my word of honor as an old soldier, in the course of my long experience in this sort of thing, I never saw such luck as yours, never! Go on, sir; *sacré mille bombes!* Go on boldly, and break the bank!"

I turned round, and saw, nodding and smiling at me with inveterate civility, a tall man, dressed in a frogged and braided surtout.

If I had been in my senses, I should have considered him, personally, as being rather a suspicious specimen of an old soldier. He had goggling, bloodshot eyes, mangy mustachios, and a broken nose. His voice betrayed a barrack-room intonation of the worst order; and he had the dirtiest pair of hands I ever saw, even in France. These little personal peculiarities exercised, however, no repelling influence on me. In the mad excitement, the reckless triumph, of that moment, I was ready to "fraternize" with anybody who encouraged me in my game. I accepted the old soldier's proffered pinch of snuff, clapped him on the back, and swore he was the honestest fellow in the world,—the most glorious relic of the Grand Army that I had ever met with. "Go on!" cried my military friend, snapping his fingers

in ecstasy,—"go on, and win! Break the bank; *mille tonnerres!* My gallant English comrade, break the bank!"

And I *did* go on,—went on at such a rate, that in another quarter of an hour the croupier called out, "Gentlemen, the bank has discontinued for tonight!" All the notes, and all the gold in that "bank," now lay in a heap under my hands; the whole floating capital of the gambling-house was waiting to pour into my pockets.

"Tie up the money in your pocket-handkerchief, my worthy sir," said the old soldier, as I wildly plunged my hands into my heap of gold. "Tie it up as we used to tie up a bit of dinner in the Grand Army: your winnings are too heavy for any breeches-pockets that ever were sewed. There, that's it. Shovel them in, notes and all. *Credié!* what luck! Stop! another Napoleon on the floor! *Ah! sacré petit polisson de Napoleon!* have I found thee at last? Now then, sir, two tight double-knots each way, with your honorable permission, and the money's safe. Feel it! feel it, fortunate sir! hard and round as a cannon-ball. *Ah, bah!* if they had only fired such cannon-balls at us at Austerlitz! *nom d'une pipe!* if they only had! And now, as an ancient grenadier, as an ex-brave of the French army, what remains for me to do? I ask what? Simply this: to entreat my valued English friend to drink a bottle of champagne with me, and toast the goddess Fortune in foaming goblets before we part!"

"Excellent ex-brave! Convivial ancient grenadier! Champagne by all means! An English cheer for an old soldier! Hurrah! hurrah! Another English cheer for the goddess Fortune! Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!"

"Bravo! the Englishman; the amiable, gracious Englishman, in whose veins circulates the vivacious blood of France! Another glass? *Ah, bah!* the bottle is empty. Never mind! *Vive le vin!* I, the old soldier, order another bottle, and half a pound of *bonbons* with it!"

"No, no, ex-brave; never, ancient grenadier! *Your* bottle last time; *my* bottle this. Behold it! Toast away! The French army! the great Napoleon! the present company! the croupier! the honest croupier's wife and daughters—if he has any! the ladies generally! Everybody in the world!"

By the time the second bottle of champagne was emptied, I felt as if I had been drinking liquid fire: my brain seemed all aflame. No excess in wine had ever had this effect on me before in my life. Was

it the result of a stimulant acting upon my system when I was in a highly excited state? Was my stomach in a particularly disordered condition? Or was the champagne amazingly strong?

"Ex-brave of the French army!" cried I, in a mad state of exhilaration, "*I am* on fire! how are *you?* You have set me on fire! Do you hear, my hero of Austerlitz? Let us have a third bottle of champagne to put the flame out!"

The old soldier wagged his head, rolled his goggle eyes, until I expected to see them slip out of their sockets; placed his dirty forefinger by the side of his broken nose; solemnly ejaculated "Coffee!" and immediately ran off into an inner room.

The word pronounced by the eccentric veteran seemed to have a magical effect on the rest of the company present. With one accord they all rose to depart. Probably they had expected to profit by my intoxication; but, finding that my new friend was benevolently bent on preventing me from getting dead drunk, had now abandoned all hope of thriving pleasantly on my winnings. Whatever their motive might be, at any rate they went away in a body. When the old soldier returned, and sat down again opposite to me at the table, we had the room to ourselves. I could see the croupier, in a sort of vestibule which opened out of it, eating his supper in solitude. The silence was now deeper than ever.

A sudden change, too, had come over the "ex-brave." He assumed a portentously solemn look; and, when he spoke to me again, his speech was ornamented by no oaths, enforced by no finger-snapping, enlivened by no apostrophes or exclamations.

"Listen, my dear sir," he said, in mysteriously confidential tones,—"listen to an old soldier's advice. I have been to the mistress of this house (a very charming woman, with a genius for cookery), to impress on her the necessity of making us some particularly strong and good coffee. You must drink this coffee in order to get rid of your little amiable exaltation of spirits before you think of going home,—you *must,* my good and gracious friend! With all that money to take home tonight, it is a sacred duty to yourself to have your wits about you. You are known to be a winner, to an enormous extent, by several gentlemen present tonight, who, in a certain point of view, are very worthy and excellent fellows; but they are mortal men, my dear sir, and they have their amiable weaknesses! Need I say more? Ah, no,

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no! you understand me. Now, this is what you must do,—send for a cabriolet when you feel quite well again, draw up all the windows when you get into it, and tell the driver to take you home only through the large and well-lighted thoroughfares. Do this, and you and your money will be safe. Do this, and tomorrow you will thank an old soldier for giving you a word of honest advice."

Just as the ex-brave ended his oration in very lachrymose tones, the coffee came in, ready poured out in two cups. My attentive friend handed me one of the cups with a bow. I was parched with thirst, and drank it off at a draught. Almost instantly afterwards, I was seized with a fit of giddiness, and felt more completely intoxicated than ever. The room whirled round and round furiously; the old soldier seemed to be regularly bobbing up and down before me like the piston of the steam-engine. I was half deafened by a violent singing in my ears; a feeling of utter bewilderment, helplessness, idiocy, overcame me. I rose from my chair, holding on by the table to keep my balance; and stammered out, that I felt dreadfully unwell,—so unwell that I did not know how I was to get home.

"My dear friend," answered the old soldier, and even his voice seemed to be bobbing up and down as he spoke,—"my dear friend, it would be madness to go home in *your* state; you would be sure to lose your money; you might be robbed and murdered with the greatest ease. *I* am going to sleep here: do *you* sleep here too. They make up capital beds in this house: take one, sleep off the effects of the wine, and go home safely with your winnings tomorrow,—tomorrow, in broad daylight."

I had but two ideas left,—one, that I must never let go hold of my handkerchief full of money; the other, that I must lie down somewhere immediately, and fall off into a comfortable sleep. So I agreed to the proposal about the bed, and took the offered arm of the old soldier, carrying my money with my disengaged hand. Preceded by the croupier, we passed along some passages, and up a flight of stairs, into the bedroom which I was to occupy. The ex-brave shook me warmly by the hand, proposed that we should breakfast together, and then, followed by the croupier, left me for the night.

I ran to the wash-stand; drank some of the water in my jug; poured the rest out, and plunged my face into it; then sat down in a chair, and tried to compose myself. I soon felt better. The change for my

lungs, from the fetid atmosphere of the gambling-room to the cool air of the apartment I now occupied; the almost equally refreshing change for my eyes, from the glaring gas-lights of the "salon" to the dim, quiet flicker of one bedroom candle,— aided wonderfully the restorative effects of cold water. The giddiness left me, and I began to feel a little like a reasonable being again. My first thought was of the risk of sleeping all night in a gambling-house; my second, of the still greater risk of trying to get out after the house was closed, and of going home alone at night, through the streets of Paris, with a large sum of money about me. I had slept in worse places than this on my travels: so I determined to lock, bolt, and barricade my door, and take my chance till the next morning.

Accordingly, I secured myself against all intrusion; looked under the bed, and into the cupboard; tried the fastening of the window; and then, satisfied that I had taken every proper precaution, pulled off my upper clothing, put my light, which was a dim one, on the hearth among a feathery litter of wood-ashes, and got into bed, with the handkerchief full of money under my pillow.

I soon felt not only that I could not go to sleep, but that I could not even close my eyes. I was wide awake, and in a high fever. Every nerve in my body trembled; every one of my senses seemed to be preternaturally sharpened. I tossed and rolled, and tried every kind of position, and perseveringly sought out the cold corners of the bed, and all to no purpose. Now I thrust my arms over the clothes; now I poked them under the clothes. Now I violently shot my legs straight out down to the bottom of the bed; now I convulsively coiled them up as near my chin as they would go. Now I shook out my crumpled pillow, changed it to the cool side, patted it flat, and lay down quietly on my back; now I fiercely doubled it in two, set it up on end, thrust it against the board of the bed, and tried a sitting-posture. Every effort was in vain. I groaned with vexation, as I felt that I was in for a sleepless night.

What could I do? I had no book to read. And yet, unless I found out some method of diverting my mind, I felt certain that I was in the condition to imagine all sorts of horrors, to rack my brain with forebodings of every possible and impossible danger, in short, to pass the night in suffering all conceivable varieties of nervous terror.

I raised myself on my elbow, and looked about the room, which was

brightened by a lovely moonlight pouring straight through the window, to see if it contained any pictures or ornaments that I could at all clearly distinguish. While my eyes wandered from wall to wall, a remembrance of Le Maistre's delightful little book, "Voyage autour de ma Chambre," occurred to me. I resolved to imitate the French author, and find occupation and amusement enough to relieve the tedium of my wakefulness, by making a mental inventory of every article of furniture I could see, and by following up to their sources the multitude of associations which even a chair, a table, or a wash-hand stand may be made to call forth.

In the nervous, unsettled state of my mind at that moment, I found it much easier to make my inventory than to make my reflections, and thereupon soon gave up all hope of thinking in Le Maistre's fanciful track, or, indeed, of thinking at all. I looked about the room at the different articles of furniture, and did nothing more.

There was, first, the bed I was lying in,—a four-post bed, of all things in the world, to meet with in Paris! yes, a thorough, clumsy British four-poster, with the regular top lined with chintz, the regular fringed valance all round, the regular stifling, unwholesome curtains, which I remembered having mechanically drawn back against the posts, without particularly noticing the bed, when I first got into the room. Then there was the marble-topped wash-hand stand, from which the water I had spilt, in my hurry to pour it out, was still dripping, slowly and more slowly, on to the brick floor. Then two small chairs with my coat, waistcoat, and trousers flung on them. Then a large elbow-chair, covered with dirty white dimity, with my cravat and shirt-collar thrown over the back. Then a chest of drawers with two of the brass handles off, and a tawdry, broken china inkstand placed on it by way of ornament for the top. Then the dressing-table, adorned by a very small looking-glass, and a very large pin-cushion. Then the window, an unusually large window. Then a dark old picture, which the feeble candle dimly showed me. It was the picture of a fellow in a high Spanish hat, crowned with a plume of towering feathers. A swarthy, sinister ruffian, looking upward, shading his eyes with his hand, and looking intently upward, it might be at some tall gallows at which he was going to be hanged. At any rate, he had the appearance of thoroughly deserving it.

The picture put a kind of constraint upon me to look upward, too,

at the top of the bed. It was a gloomy, and not an interesting object; and I looked back at the picture. I counted the feathers in the man's hat: they stood out in relief,—three white, two green. I observed the crown of his hat, which was of a conical shape, according to the fashion supposed to have been favored by Guido Fawkes. I wondered what he was looking at. It couldn't be at the stars: such a desperado was neither astrologer nor astronomer. It must be at the high gallows, and he was going to be hanged presently. Would the executioner come into possession of his conical crowned hat, and plume of feathers? I counted the feathers again,—three white, two green.

While I still lingered over this very improving and intellectual employment, my thoughts insensibly began to wander. The moonlight shining into the room reminded me of a certain moonlight night in England, the night after a picnic party in a Welsh valley. Every incident of the drive homeward through lovely scenery, which the moonlight made lovelier than ever, came back to my remembrance, though I had never given the picnic a thought for years; though, if I had *tried* to recollect it, I could certainly have recalled little or nothing of that scene long past. Of all the wonderful faculties that help to tell us we are immortal, which speaks the sublime truth more eloquently than memory? Here was I, in a strange house of the most suspicious character, in a situation of uncertainty, and even of peril, which might seem to make the cool exercise of my recollection almost out of the question; nevertheless remembering, quite involuntarily, places, people, conversations, minute circumstances of every kind, which I had thought forgotten forever, which I could not possibly have recalled at will, even under the most favorable auspices. And what cause had produced, in a moment, the whole of this strange, complicated, mysterious effect? Nothing but some rays of moonlight shining in at my bedroom window.

I was still thinking of the picnic, of our merriment on the drive home, of the sentimental young lady who *would* quote Childe Harold because it was moonlight; I was absorbed by these past scenes and past amusements,—when, in an instant, the thread on which my memories hung snapped asunder; my attention immediately came back to present things more vividly than ever; and I found myself, I neither knew why nor wherefore, looking hard at the picture again.

Looking for what?

Good God! the man had pulled his hat down on his brows! No, the hat itself was gone! Where was the conical crown? Where the feathers,—three white, two green? Not there. In place of the hat and feathers, what dusky object was it that now hid his forehead, his eyes, his shading hand?

Was the bed moving?

I turned on my back, and looked up. Was I mad? drunk? dreaming? giddy again? Or was the top of the bed really moving down, sinking slowly, regularly, silently, horribly, right down throughout the whole of its length and breadth, right down upon me, as I lay underneath?

My blood seemed to stand still. A deadly, paralyzing coldness stole all over me, as I turned my head round on the pillow, and determined to test whether the bed-top was really moving or not, by keeping my eye on the man in the picture.

The next look in that direction was enough. The dull, black, frowzy outline of the valance above me was within an inch of being parallel with his waist. I still looked breathlessly; and steadily, and slowly, very slowly, I saw the figure, and the line of frame below the figure, vanish, as the valance moved down before it.

I am, constitutionally, anything but timid. I have been, on more than one occasion, in peril of my life, and have not lost my self-possession for an instant; but when the conviction first settled on my mind that the bed-top was really moving, was steadily and continuously sinking down upon me, I looked up shuddering, helpless, panic-stricken, beneath the hideous machinery for murder, which was advancing closer and closer to suffocate me where I lay.

I looked up motionless, speechless, breathless. The candle, fully spent, went out; but the moonlight still brightened the room. Down and down, without pausing and without sounding, came the bed-top; and still my panic-terror seemed to bind me faster and faster to the mattress on which I lay. Down and down it sank, till the dusty odor from the lining of the canopy came stealing into my nostrils.

At that final moment, the instinct of self-preservation startled me out of my trance, and I moved at last. There was just room for me to roll myself sideways off the bed. As I dropped noiselessly to the floor, the edge of the murderous canopy touched me on the shoulder.

Without stopping to draw my breath, without wiping the cold sweat from my face, I rose instantly on my knees to watch the bed-

top. I was literally spellbound by it. If I had heard footsteps behind me, I could not have turned round; it a means of escape had been miraculously provided for me, I could not have moved to take advantage of it. The whole life in me was, at that moment, concentrated in my eyes.

It descended; the whole canopy, with the fringe round it, came down, down, close down, so close that there was not room now to squeeze my finger between the bed-top and the bed. I felt at the sides, and discovered that what had appeared to me, from beneath, to be the ordinary light canopy of a four-post bed, was in reality a thick, broad mattress, the substance of which was concealed by the valance and its fringe. I looked up, and saw the four posts rising hideously bare. In the middle of the bed-top was a huge wooden screw that had evidently worked it down through a hole in the ceiling, just as ordinary presses are worked down on the substance selected for compression. The frightful apparatus moved without making the faintest noise. There had been no creaking as it came down: there was now not the faintest sound from the room above. Amid a dead and awful silence, I beheld before me, in the nineteenth century, and in the civilized capital of France, such a machine for secret murder by suffocation as might have existed in the worst days of the Inquisition, in the lonely inns among the Harz Mountains, in the mysterious tribunals of Westphalia! Still, as I looked on it, I could not move; I could hardly breathe; but I began to recover the power of thinking, and in a moment I discovered the murderous conspiracy framed against me, in all its horror.

My cup of coffee had been drugged, and drugged too strongly. I had been saved from being smothered by having taken an overdose of some narcotic. How I had chafed and fretted at the fever-fit which had preserved my life by keeping me awake! How recklessly I had confided myself to the two wretches who had led me into this room, determined, for the sake of my winnings, to kill me in my sleep by the surest and most horrible contrivance for secretly accomplishing my destruction! How many men, winners like me, had slept, as I had proposed to sleep, in that bed, and had never been seen or heard of more! I shuddered at the bare idea of it.

But, ere long, all thought was again suspended by the sight of the murderous canopy moving once more. After it had remained on the bed, as nearly as I could guess, about ten minutes, it began to move

up again. The villains who worked it from above evidently believed that their purpose was now accomplished. Slowly and silently, as it had descended, that horrible bed-top rose towards its former place. When it reached the upper extremities of the four posts, it reached the ceiling too. Neither hole nor screw could be seen; the bed became, in appearance, an ordinary bed again, the canopy an ordinary canopy, even to the most suspicious eyes.

Now, for the first time, I was able to move, to rise from my knees, to dress myself in my upper clothing, and to consider of how I should escape. If I betrayed, by the slightest noise, that the attempt to suffocate me had failed, I was certain to be murdered. Had I made any noise already? I listened intently, looking towards the door.

No! no footsteps in the passage outside; no sound of a tread, light or heavy, in the room above: absolute silence everywhere. Besides locking and bolting my door, I had moved an old wooden chest against it, which I had found under the bed. To remove this chest (my blood ran cold as I thought what its contents *might* be), without making some disturbance, was impossible; and, moreover, to think of escaping through the house, now barred up for the night, was sheer insanity. Only one chance was left me,—the window. I stole to it on tiptoe.

My room was on the second floor, above an *entresol,* and looked into the back street. I raised my hand to open the window, knowing that on that action hung, by the merest hair's breadth, my chance of safety. They keep vigilant watch in a house of murder. If any part of the frame cracked, if the hinge creaked, I was a lost man! It must have occupied me at least five minutes, reckoning by time,—five *hours,* reckoning by suspense,—to open that window. I succeeded in doing it silently, in doing it with all the dexterity of a housebreaker, and then looked down into the street. To leap the distance beneath me would be almost certain destruction. Next I looked round at the sides of the house. Down the left side ran a thick water-pipe: it passed close by the outer edge of the window. The moment I saw the pipe, I knew I was saved. My breath came and went freely for the first time since I had seen the canopy of the bed moving down upon me.

To some men, the means of escape which I had discovered might have seemed difficult and dangerous enough: to *me,* the prospect of slipping down the pipe into the street did not suggest even a thought of peril. I had always been accustomed, by the practice of gym-

nastics, to keep up my schoolboy powers as a daring and expert climber; and knew that my head, hands, and feet would serve me faithfully in any hazards of ascent or descent. I had already got one leg over the window-sill, when I remembered the handkerchief filled with money under my pillow. I could well have afforded to leave it behind me; but I was revengefully determined that the miscreants of the gambling-house should miss their plunder, as well as their victim. So I went back to the bed, and tied the heavy handkerchief at my back by my cravat.

Just as I had made it tight, and fixed it in a comfortable place, I thought I heard a sound of breathing outside the door. The chill feeling of horror ran through me again as I listened. No! dead silence still in the passage: I had only heard the night-air blowing softly into the room. The next moment I was on the window-sill; and the next I had a firm grip on the water-pipe with my hands and knees.

I slid down into the street easily and quietly, as I thought I should, and immediately set off, at the top of my speed, to a branch "prefecture" of police, which I knew was situated in the immediate neighborhood. A "sub-prefect," and several picked men among his subordinates, happened to be up, maturing, I believe, some scheme for discovering the perpetrator of a mysterious murder which all Paris was talking of just then. When I began my story in a breathless hurry, and in very bad French, I could see that the sub-prefect suspected me of being a drunken Englishman who had robbed somebody; but he soon altered his opinion as I went on; and, before I had anything like concluded, he shoved all the papers before him into a drawer, put on his hat, supplied me with another (for I was bareheaded), ordered a file of soldiers, desired his expert followers to get ready all sorts of tools for breaking open doors, and ripping up brick flooring, and took my arm, in the most friendly and familiar manner possible, to lead me with him out of the house. I will venture to say, that when the sub-prefect was a little boy, and was taken for the first time to the play, he was not half as much pleased as he was now at the job in prospect for him at the gambling-house.

Away we went through the streets, the sub-prefect cross-examining and congratulating me in the same breath, as we marched at the head of our formidable *posse comitatus*. Sentinels were placed at the back and front of the house the moment we got to it. A tremendous battery

of knocks was directed against the door; a light appeared at the window; I was told to conceal myself behind the police. Then came more knocks, and a cry of "Open, in the name of the law!" At that terrible summons, bolts and locks gave way before an invisible hand; and, the moment after, the sub-prefect was in the passage, confronting a waiter, half-dressed, and ghastly pale. This was the short dialogue which immediately took place:—

"We want to see the Englishman who is sleeping in this house."

"He went away hours ago."

"He did no such thing. His friend went away: *he* remained. Show us to his bedroom."

"I swear to you, M. le Sous-prefet, he is not here. He—"

"I swear to you, M. le Garçon, he is. He slept here; he didn't find your bed comfortable; he came to us to complain of it; here he is, among my men; and here am I, ready to look for a flea or two in his bedstead. Renaudin!" (calling to one of the subordinates and pointing to the waiter), "collar that man, and tie his hands behind him. Now, then, gentlemen, let us walk upstairs."

Every man and woman in the house was secured,—the "old soldier" the first. Then I identified the bed in which I had slept; and then we went into the room above.

No object that was at all extraordinary appeared in any part of it. The sub-prefect looked round the place, commanded everybody to be silent, stamped twice on the floor, called for a candle, looked attentively at the spot he had stamped on, and ordered the flooring there to be carefully taken up. This was done in no time. Lights were produced; and we saw a deep, raftered cavity between the floor of this room, and the ceiling of the room beneath. Through this cavity, there ran perpendicularly a sort of case of iron, thickly greased; and inside the case appeared the screw, which communicated with the bed-top below. Extra lengths of screw, freshly oiled; levers, covered with felt; all the complete upper works of a heavy press, constructed with infernal ingenuity so as to join the fixtures below, and, when taken to pieces again, to go into the smallest possible compass,—were next discovered, and pulled out upon the floor. After some little difficulty, the sub-prefect succeeded in putting the machinery together, and, leaving his men to work it, descended with me to the bedroom. The smothering canopy was then lowered, but not so noiselessly as I had seen it

lowered. When I mentioned this to the sub-prefect, his answer, simple as it was, had a terrible significance. "My men," said he, "are working down the bed-top for the first time: the men whose money you won were in better practice."

We left the house in the sole possession of two police-agents, every one of the inmates being removed to prison on the spot. The sub-prefect, after taking down my *procès verbal* in his office, returned with me to my hotel to get my passport. "Do you think," I asked, as I gave it to him, "that any men have really been smothered in that bed, as they tried to smother *me?*"

"I have seen dozens of drowned men laid out at the Morgue," answered the sub-prefect, "in whose pocket-books were found letters, stating that they had committed suicide in the Seine, because they had lost everything at the gaming-table. Do I know how many of those men entered the same gambling-house that *you* entered, won as *you* won, took that bed as *you* took it, slept in it, were smothered in it, and were privately thrown into the river, with a letter of explanation written by the murderers, and placed in their pocket-books? No man can say how many, or how few, have suffered the fate from which you have escaped. The people of the gambling-house kept their bedstead-machinery a secret from *us,* even from the police. The dead kept the rest of the secret from them. Good-night, or, rather, good-morning, Mr. Faulkner! Be at my office again at nine o'clock. In the meantime, *au revoir!*"

The rest of my story is soon told. I was examined and re-examined; the gambling-house was strictly searched all through, from top to bottom; the prisoners were separately interrogated; and two of the less guilty among them made a confession. *I* discovered that the old soldier was the master of the gambling-house: *justice* discovered that he had been drummed out of the army, as a vagabond, years ago; that he had been guilty of all sorts of villainies since, that he was in possession of stolen property, which the owners identified; and that he, the croupier, another accomplice, and the woman who had made my cup of coffee, were all in the secret of the bedstead. There appeared some reason to doubt whether the inferior persons attached to the house knew anything of the suffocating machinery; and they received the benefit of that doubt, by being treated simply as thieves and vagabonds. As for the old soldier and his two head-myrmidons, they went

to the galleys; the woman who had drugged my coffee was imprisoned for I forget how many years; the regular attendants at the gambling-house were considered "suspicious," and placed under "surveillance"; and I became, for one whole week (which is a long time), the head "lion" in Parisian society. My adventure was dramatized by three illustrious playmakers, but never saw theatrical daylight; for the censorship forbade the introduction, on the stage, of a correct copy of the gambling-house bedstead.

One good result was produced by my adventure, which any censorship must have approved: it cured me of ever again trying *Rouge et Noir* as an amusement. The sight of a green cloth, with packs of cards and heaps of money on it, will henceforth be forever associated, in my mind, with the sight of a bed-canopy descending to suffocate me in the silence and darkness of the night.

Intersignum[1]

BY VILLIERS DE L'ISLE-ADAM

(*1840-1889*)

One winter's evening, in a thoughtful company, we were drinking tea round a good fire in the house of a friend of ours, Baron Xavier de la V—. He was a pale young man whom the somewhat lengthy fatigues of military life in Africa, undergone whilst he was still very young, had left with an uncommon weakness of constitution and impetuosity of character. The conversation turned upon a singularly sinister subject; we were concerned with the *nature* of those extraordinary coincidences, dumbfounding and mysterious, which arise in the lives of some persons.

"Here is a story," he said to us, "which I shall relate without adding any words of commentary. It is authentic. And perhaps you will find it striking."

We lit cigarettes, and listened to the recital which follows:

One evening, in 1876, about the autumn solstice, and about the time when the ever-increasing number of burials carried out too lightly, too precipitately in fact, was beginning to revolt the bourgeoisie of Paris and fill it with alarm, I emerged about eight o'clock from an extremely curious spiritualistic séance. And on my way home, I felt myself under the influence of that inborn *spleen,* that restless melancholy, which, with all its black obsession, baffles and nullifies the efforts of the Faculty.

In vain, at the bidding of medical men, had I dazed myself, many times over, with the draught of Avicenna; in vain had I assimilated, under different formulæ, quintals of iron, and, spurning every pleasure, made myself a new Robert d'Arbrissel, and lowered the quicksilver of

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my ardent passions to the temperature of the Samoyedes—but all to no avail! However—it seems that I am decidedly a person both taciturn and morose! But beneath a nervous exterior I must also be, as they say, "built with limestone and sand," to find myself after so many treatments still able to gaze at the stars.

Well, that evening, once back in my room, I lit a cigar at the candles by the mirror, and as I did so I noticed that I was deathly pale. I buried myself in a large armchair, an old piece of furniture of dark red velvet drawn in by buttons, wherein the flight of the hours, in my long reveries, seemed less oppressive. The bout of melancholy was becoming painful to the point of physical illness—nay, of collapse! I felt that it was impossible to shake myself free from its shadows by any mundane distractions—especially amidst the horrible cares which were then besetting the capital—so I resolved, in order to find diversion, to make the experiment of leaving Paris behind me, and going far away to commune to some extent with nature, and indulging in spirited exercise; some healthy shooting expeditions, for instance.

Just when the thought had come to me, *at the very moment* when I decided on this course of action, the name of an old friend, forgotten for many years, came into my mind.

"The Abbé Maucombe!" I said in a low voice.

My last meeting with this learned priest was at the time of his departure for a lengthy pilgrimage to Palestine. The news of his return had reached me some time back. He lived in the humble presbytery of a small village in Lower Brittany.

Surely Maucombe must have some sort of chamber at his disposal, a garret even? And doubtless he had collected a few old books in the course of his travels? Or some curiosities from Lebanon? The ponds near the neighbouring manors must harbour, one would wager, some wild duck? What could be more opportune! And if I wished, before the first cold weather, to enjoy the last fortnight of the enchanted month of October among the reddened rocks, if I wanted to see the long autumn evenings still glowing on the wooded heights, I must make haste!

The clock struck nine.

I rose, and knocked the ash from my cigar. Then, as befitted a man of decision, I put on my hat, my cloak, and my gloves. I took my valise and gun, snuffed the candles, and went out jauntily, closing the

door and triply turning the old secret lock which is its especial pride.

Three-quarters of an hour later, the train of the Brittany line was bearing me towards the little village of Saint-Maur, served by the Abbé Maucombe: I had even found time at the station to send off a hastily pencilled letter in which I advised the good father of my departure.

Next morning I was at R—, from which town Saint-Maur is only about a couple of leagues distant.

I was anxious to make sure of a good night (in order to take my gun at dawn next day), and any after-luncheon siesta seemed likely to encroach on the perfection of my sleep, so I devoted my day, in order to keep myself awake despite fatigue, to paying several calls on old friends of student days. These duties fulfilled, I had a horse saddled about five in the evening at the Soleil d'Or, where I had put up, and in the glow of sunset I found myself within sight of a hamlet.

On my way I had been calling to mind as much as I could remember of the priest with whom I planned to stay for these few days. The lapse of time that had gone by since our last meeting, travel, intervening events, and habits of isolation, must all have modified his character and person. I would find him turning grey. But I was familiar with the inspiriting conversation of the learned rector—and indulged myself hopefully in thinking of the evenings we should be spending together.

"The Abbé Maucombe!" I kept repeating to myself under my breath, "a capital idea!"

I made inquiries as to his lodging from the old folk who were pasturing the cattle along the ditches, and could not but be convinced that the curé—as befits the confessor of a God of mercy—had won the deep affection of his flock; and when they had pointed out to me the road to the presbytery, somewhat removed from the clump of tumble-down houses and thatched cottages which constitutes the village of Saint-Maur, I made over in its direction.

I arrived.

The rustic aspect of the house, the casement windows and the green blinds, the three sandstone steps, the ivy, clematis, and tea-roses which tangled themselves over the walls up to the very roof, from which, through a chimney-pot with a weathercock, came a thin thread of smoke—all this inspired me with images of repose, healthfulness,

and a deep peace. Through a trellised enclosure, the trees of a neighbouring orchard showed their leaves, rusty red in the declining season. The two windows of the single-storey were gleaming in the flames of the sunset; a niche containing the statue of a saint was hollowed out between them. Silently, I dismounted, tied the horse to the shutter, and raised the knocker of the door, casting a traveller's glance at the horizon away behind me.

But the horizon gleamed brightly upon the far-off forests of oaks and wild pine-trees, where the last birds were wheeling in the evening air; the waters of a reedy pond in the distance gravely reflected the sky; and in the midst of these calm airs, in this lovely countryside, at this moment of the falling silence, nature was fair indeed. And, without leaving the lifted knocker, I stood still and silent.

"Ah!" thought I, "here are you, a man who knows not the sheltering home of his dreams! For you, after all your marches under evil stars, the land of Canaan, with its palms and its running waters, rises not into sight in the heart of the dawn. You were gladsome when you set forth on your travels, but now you are saddened! O heart, made for other exiles than those whose bitterness you share with evil brethren, look hither! Here the dead dreams come back to life, preceding the moments of the tomb! If you desire truly to die, then draw near; for here the sight of heaven exalts one into forgetfulness!"

I was in that state of lassitude in which high-strung nerves will vibrate at the lightest touch. A leaf fell at my side; its furtive rustle made me start. And the enchanted horizon of this country entered into my eyes. I sat down in front of the door, in solitude.

After a short time, as the evening began to grow cool, I returned to feelings of reality. I rose quickly, and took hold again of the door-knocker, with a look at the smiling house as I did so.

But scarcely had I thrown the second heedless glance at it, when I was compelled to check my hand once more, wondering this time whether I were not the victim of hallucination.

Was this really the house I had seen just a moment ago? What antiquity was this which *now* was made plain to me by the long crevices between the pale leaves?—This building had an air of being foreign to me; the panes, lighted up by the rays of the evening's dying moments, burned with an intense glow; the hospitable doorway invited me with its three steps; but concentrating my attention upon these grey flag-

tones, I saw that they had been lately polished, that traces of chiselled haracters were still extant on them, and I realized that they came from he graveyard close by, the black crosses of which became visible to me, n one side, a hundred paces distant. And the house seemed to me to e changed, and changed in a frightening way, and the echoes of the nournful stroke of the knocker, as I let it drop in my sudden alarm, ang out in the interior like the reverberation of a knell.

A *glimpse* of that kind, being moral rather than physical, is very peedily effaced. Yes, without a shade of doubt, I was the victim of hat mental depression which I have mentioned. Eager now to have ght of a face whose humanity would help me to dissipate the memory, lifted the latch without waiting longer. And I entered.

The door, swung by a clock-weight, closed of itself behind me.

I found myself in a long corridor. At the far end of it Nanon, the ousekeeper, old and kindly-looking, was coming down the staircase, andle in hand.

"Monsieur Xavier!" she exclaimed, delighted to recognize me.

"Good evening, my dear Nanon!" I made answer, hurriedly, handing er my valise and gun.

(My cloak I had forgotten in my room at the Soleil d'Or.)

I went upstairs. And a moment later I was clasping my old friend n my arms.

The affectionate emotion of the first words, and the sense of the nelancholy of time past, lay heavy on both the Abbé and myself for a ttle while. Nanon came to bring us the lamp and say that supper as ready.

"My dear Maucombe," I said, slipping my arm through his to go ownstairs, "the friendship of the mind is a thing of all eternity, and I an see that we share this feeling."

"There are Christian spirits endowed with a divine kinship of the losest kind," he answered me. "Yes. The world has some beliefs hich are less 'reasonable,' yet for which partisans can be found to acrifice their blood, their happiness, their duty. They are fanatics!" e ended with a smile. "We should choose, as a matter of faith, the nost useful, once we are free, and since we become what we believe."

"The fact is," I replied, "that it is already a very mysterious thing hat two and two make four."

We went into the dining-room. During our meal the Abbé reproached

me gently with the forgetfulness into which I had so long let him fall, and informed me as to the village and its state of mind.

He spoke of the country, and told me two or three anecdotes of the local squires.

He recounted his personal achievements with the gun, and his triumphs with the rod; in short, he displayed a charming geniality and infectious enthusiasm.

Nanon, a prompt messenger, exerted herself to the full, multiplying her attentions around us, and her huge coif flapped like a pair of wings.

I was rolling a cigarette while I took my coffee, and Maucombe, who had been an officer of dragoons in his day, followed my example. The silence of the first puffs having overtaken us in our thoughtfulness, I set myself to a close scrutiny of my host.

The priest was a man of forty-five or thereabouts, and of tall build. The curling ringlets of his long grey hair framed his thin and forceful features. They were regular and austere; his slender frame resisted the droop of the years; he wore his long cassock with an air. His words, baring the impress of knowledge and kindliness upon them, were borne upon a finely pitched voice, which itself gave token of the strength of his lungs. He struck me, in fact, as enjoying vigorous health; the years had left few marks upon him.

He took me into his little library and sitting-room.

Lack of sleep on a journey predisposes one to a sense of chill; the evening was keenly cold, a forerunner of the winter. So, when an armful of twigs, between two or three logs, flamed up before my knees, I felt a certain gratefulness.

With our feet on the fire-dogs, our elbows propped on the arms of our two deep chairs of dingy leather, we spoke, as a matter of course, of God.

I was fatigued; I listened without offering a reply.

"So, in conclusion," said Maucombe, rising, "we are here to bear witness—by our works, our thoughts, our words, and our struggles against Nature—to bear witness whether or no *our weight is what it should be.*"

And he ended with a quotation from Joseph de Maistre: "Between Man and God, there stands only Pride."

"But none the less," said I, "we have the honour of existing (we, the spoilt children of this same Nature) in an age of enlightenment?"

"Let us prefer rather the Light of Ages," he answered with a smile.

We had reached the landing, holding our candles.

A long passage, running parallel with the one downstairs, separated the room destined for myself from that of my host. He insisted on seeing me installed in it himself. We went in; he looked round to see that I lacked nothing, and when he came near and we gave each other good-night and a handshake, a darting gleam of my candle fell on his countenance—and this time, I started!

Was this a man in his mortal agony who stood there, close by the bed? The face before me now was not, could not be, that of the host of our supper-table! At least, if I did recognize it vaguely, it seemed to me that until this moment I had never seen it in all its reality. One reflection, and only one, will make my meaning clear: the Abbé at that moment gave me, in human form, that *second* sensation which, by some obscure connection, had been given me by his house.

The head I looked upon was grave, extremely pale, with the pallor of death indeed, and the eyelids were lowered. Was he praying? What could it be that made him hold himself thus? His person had become enwrapped in a solemnity so abruptly that I closed my eyes. When I opened them again after an instant, the good Abbé was still there—but now I could recognize him. And none too soon! His friendly smile dissipated all disquietude within me. The impression had not lasted long enough for me to address a question to him. It had been a seizure, a kind of hallucination.

A second time, Maucombe wished me good-night.

When I was alone, I thought: "A sound sleep, that's what I need!"

My thoughts turned incontinently upon Death; I raised my soul to God, and climbed into bed.

One of the peculiarities of extreme fatigue is the impossibility of immediate sleep. Every sportsman has experienced this. It is a matter of common knowledge.

I had anticipated that sleep would come both soon and overwhelmingly. I had founded the highest of hopes on a good night. But at the end of ten minutes I was forced to recognize that this nervous distress was not at all likely to sink into torpor. I heard ticking sounds, the sudden crack of the woodwork and the walls. The death-watch,

no doubt. Each and every one of the imperceptible noises of night-time found the echo of an electric shock through my whole being.

Out in the garden, the black branches creaked as they rubbed one against another in the wind. Every moment the ivy tapped upon my window. I felt my sense of hearing grown to surpassing keenness, as it does in men dying of hunger.

"I took two cups of coffee; that's what it is!" I reflected.

And leaning with one elbow propped on the pillow, I began gazing obstinately at the flame of the candle on the table by my side. I stared fixedly at it, through my eyelashes, with that strained attention lent to one's sight by complete abstraction from thought.

A small holy-water stoup of coloured porcelain, with its sprig of box, was hung beside the head of my bed. Suddenly I damped my eyelids with the blessed water to refresh them, then blew out the candle, and closed my eyes. Sleep was approaching, the fever was sinking.

I was going to fall asleep.

Three short, sharp knocks were struck on my door, commandingly.

"What?" I said to myself with a start.

Then I perceived that my first sleep had already come over me. I did not know where I was. I thought myself in Paris. Certain kinds of repose give just that comical effect of forgetfulness. But almost at once I lost count of the chief cause of my wakening, and stretched myself out luxuriously in complete unconsciousness of the situation.

"By the way," I said to myself suddenly, "was not somebody knocking? What visit can possibly—"

But at that point of my phrase, a confused and dim notion came to my mind that I was no longer in Paris; I was in a Breton presbytery, with the Abbé Maucombe.

In the twinkling of an eye I was out in the middle of the room.

My first impression, simultaneous with one of chilled feet, was of a bright light. Straight opposite the window, above the church, the full moon was shining, and through the white curtains was cutting out its segment of pale and desolate flame on the floor-boards.

It was midnight.

My ideas were darkened with morbidity. What was it then? The shadow was extraordinary.

As I approached the door, a spot of glowing light coming from the keyhole fell straying across my hand and sleeves.

Then there was somebody behind the door; somebody really had knocked.

And yet, a couple of paces from the latch, I stopped dead.

One thing struck me as surprising: the *nature* of the stain that flowed over my hand. It was a frozen gleam, blood-red and lightless.—On the other hand, how was it that I saw no streak of light under the door, out in the corridor?—But in all truth, what was emerging thus from the keyhole gave me the sensation of the phosphorescent gaze of an owl!

At that moment the hour struck outside from the church, borne on the night wind.

"Who's there?" I asked, in a low voice.

The gleam was extinguished. I was just about to approach.

But the door opened—opened wide, and slowly, and silently.

In front of me, in the corridor, stood a priest, erect, a tall dark shape—a priest, with the three-cornered hat of an abbé on his head. The moon lit up his whole figure, with the exception of his features. I could see only the fire of his two pupils, gazing upon me with fixed and solemn stare.

The breath of the other world enveloped this visitant; his attitude bore down my soul. Paralysed by an alarm which rose instantly to the point of paroxysm, I contemplated this woeful personage in silence.

Suddenly the priest raised his arm, slowly, in my direction. He held out some object, heavy and ill-defined. It was a cloak. A large black travelling cloak. He held it out as if offering it to me. . . .

I closed my eyes, so as not to see that. Oh! I could not bear to see that! But a night-bird, with a fearful cry, passed between us, and the wind of its wings brushed my eyelids and forced me to open them. I felt that it was fluttering here and there through the room.

And then—with an anguished cry, for my strength betrayed me into crying aloud—I pushed the door to, with both my outstretched twitching hands, and gave a violent turn to the lock, frantic, my hair standing on end!

And a singular thing: all this seemed to me to make no sound.

It was more than flesh and blood could stand. I woke up. I was sitting upright in my bed, my arms stretched out in front of me. I was frozen, my brow dripped with sweat; my heart struck heavy, tolling against the walls of my breast.

"Ah!" I exclaimed to myself, "what a horrible dream!"

All the same, my insurmountable dread continued. It took me more than a minute to *dare* to move my arms and grope for the matches. I had a dread of feeling in the darkness a cold hand catch hold of mine, and press it friendlily.

I had a nervous tremor when I heard the matches rattle beneath my fingers in the metal of the candlestick. I relit the candle.

At once I felt better. Light, that God-sent vibration, breaks up the glooms of woe and soothes the terrors of baleful happenings.

I resolved to drink a glass of water, to restore myself completely, and I got out of bed.

Passing in front of the window, I noticed something: the moon was exactly like the moon of my dream, although I had not seen it before I went to bed. And on going to examine the lock of the door, with my candle in my hand, I observed that a turn of the key had been given *on the inside,* which I certainly had not done before my sleep.

On these discoveries, I cast a glance around me. I began to feel that a very uncanny atmosphere surrounded the incident. I went back to bed, I leaned on my elbows, I strove to reason with myself, to prove to my own satisfaction that all this was merely an attack of an extremely lucid somnambulism; but less and less was I reassured. Weariness, however, bore down upon me like a wave, cradled my black fancies, and abruptly sent me to sleep in my distress.

When I awoke, bright sunshine was playing in the room.

It was a joyous morning. My watch, hanging from a hook over my head, showed that it was ten o'clock. Well, is there anything that can bring comfort to us better than the daylight, the radiant sun? Especially when we feel the balmy outside airs and the countryside, full of fresh wind amongst the trees, of thorny thickets, of ditches carpeted with flowers, and of everything fresh with the dews of dawn!

I dressed in haste, forgetful of the sinister beginning of my night's history.

Completely revived by repeated splashings of cold water, I came downstairs.

The Abbé Maucombe was in the dining-room; seated before the cloth already laid, he was reading a newspaper as he waited for me.

We clasped hands.

"Did you pass a good night, Xavier, my friend?" he asked me.

"Capital!" I answered, in an offhand way—from habit, without paying the slightest attention to what I was saying.

The truth is that I felt a keen appetite—that is all.

Nanon intervened, bringing in our breakfast.

During the meal our chat was at once calm and happy. The only man who knows happiness is he who lives a saintly life; and only he can communicate it.

Suddenly I remembered my dream.

"By the way, my dear Abbé," I exclaimed, "I remember having a very singular dream last night—exceedingly strange . . . how can I express it? Well . . . startling? Astonishing? Terrifying?—Choose which you will! But judge for yourself."

And as I peeled an apple, I began to tell him the story, with all the details, of the sinister hallucination which had disturbed my first sleep.

When I reached the point of the priest's *gesture* as he offered me the cloak, and *before I had actually begun the phrase,* the door of the dining-room opened. Nanon, with the familiarity peculiar to the housekeepers of parish priests, entered into the rays of sunlight, and right into the middle of the conversation. Interrupting me, she held out a paper.

"Here is a letter, 'very urgent,' for you, sir," she said. "The postman has just brought it."

"A letter! Already!" I exclaimed, *forgetting my story.* "It is from my father. How is that?—My dear Abbé, you'll excuse me if I read it, will you not?"

"Of course," said the Abbé Maucombe, likewise losing sight of the story, and sympathetically feeling my own interest in the letter. "Of course!"

I broke the seal.

Thus, the abruptness of the incident of Nanon's entrance had distracted our attention.

"Here's a tiresome disappointment, my worthy host," said I. "I've scarcely arrived, when I find myself obliged to return."

"How so?" asked the Abbé Maucombe, setting down his cup untasted.

"He has written to bid me return in all haste, in connection with some business, a lawsuit of the gravest consequence. I expected it would only be coming up in December; and now I'm informed that

it will be heard within a fortnight. I am the only person who can set in order the final papers which are to win our case for us, and so I must go off! How very annoying!"

"Indeed, it is!" said the Abbé. "Annoying it certainly is!—At least you must promise me that as soon as this is finished with . . . The great cause, after all, is the salvation of the soul, and I had hopes of playing some part in that of yours—and here you are slipping out of my hands! I was beginning to think that God Himself had sent you. . . ."

"My dear Abbé," I exclaimed, "I shall leave my gun with you. Within three weeks I'll be back, and this time for several weeks, if you are willing."

"Well, go in peace!" said the Abbé Maucombe.

"It's a question, you see, of the whole of my fortune!" I murmured.

"One's fortune is God!" said the Abbé, simply.

"And how should I live tomorrow, if . . ."

"Tomorrow, one lives no more," he answered.

Soon we rose from table, a little consoled for the disappointment by this formal promise to return.

We went for a stroll in the orchard, to inspect the surroundings of the presbytery.

Throughout the day, the Abbé was showing me his humble rural treasures. Then, while he was reading his breviary, I took a solitary walk in the surrounding country, breathing with delight the pure and bracing air. When he came in again, Maucombe discoursed a little on his journey to the Holy Land; all of which brought us to the hour of sunset.

Evening came. After a frugal supper, I said to the Abbé:

"Well, my good friend, the express leaves at nine o'clock exactly. From here to R—, I have a good hour and a half on the road. I shall need half an hour to settle up with the inn there when I take the horse back; total, two hours. It is seven o'clock now. I must leave you instantly."

"I shall come part of the way with you," said the priest. "The walk will do me good."

"By the way," I answered, preoccupied, "here is my father's address (I live with him in Paris) in case we have to write to each other."

Nanon took the card and stuck it in the rim of the glass.

Three minutes later the Abbé and I left the presbytery and made our way along the highroad. I was leading my horse by the bridle, as one might expect.

Already we were like two shadows.

Five minutes after our departure, a soaking drizzle, a very fine and very cold rain, driven by a fearful blast of wind, lashed our hands and faces.

I stopped short.

"No, my good friend," said I to the Abbé, "decidedly not! I shall not allow this. Your existence is precious and this icy downpour is most dangerous. Go home. I say it again, this rain might give you a most perilous drenching. Go back, I pray you."

A moment, and the Abbé, thinking of his parishioners, yielded to my appeal.

"I take back your promise with me, my dear friend, do I?" he said.

And as I held out my hand, he added:

"One moment: you have a long way to go, I think, and this drizzle is really very penetrating!"

He shivered. We were close beside each other, motionless, looking fixedly at each other, like two hurried travellers.

And at that moment the moon rose up over the pine trees, behind the hills, lighting up the sandy plains and the woods on the horizon. Unbidden, it bathed us in its pale and mournful light, with its pale and desolate flame. The silhouettes of the horse and of ourselves were outlined, enormous, on the roadway.—And from the direction of the old ruined stone crosses which rise, in this canton of Brittany, in the copses where perch the mournful birds escaped from the wood of the Dying—I heard, afar off, a frightful *cry*, a sharp, startling falsetto. An owl with its phosphorescent eyes, their gleam quivering on the great branch of a holm-oak, took wing and passed between us, drawing out this same cry.

"Come," went on the Abbé Maucombe, "I shall be home in a moment. So *take—take this cloak*. I am very fond of it! Very fond!" he added in an unforgettable tone. "You can send it back to me by the man from the inn; he comes to the village every day. . . . *I pray you.*"

And with these words, the Abbé held out his black cloak to me.

I did not see his face, on account of the shadow cast by his broad three-cornered hat; but I could distinguish his eyes, *gazing upon me with solemn, fixed stare.*

He flung the cloak over my shoulders, and fixed its clasps with an air of tenderness and concern, while I closed my eyelids in a kind of weakness. And taking advantage of my silence, he hurried off towards his home. At the turning of the road he disappeared.

With returned presence of mind, and also partly mechanically, I mounted my horse. Then I remained motionless.

I was now alone on the highroad. I could hear the myriad noises of the countryside. Opening my eyes again, I saw the vast, livid sky, crossed by a multitude of leaden clouds that hid the moon—all the solitude of nature. None the less, I held myself straight and firm, though I must have been white as a sheet.

"Come, be calm!" said I to myself. "I am feverish, and I am a sleep-walker. That is all."

I forced myself to shrug my shoulders; but a hidden weight seemed to prevent me.

And now, coming from the recesses of the far horizon, from the depths of those ill-omened woods, a flight of ospreys came across with a great noise of wings, and crying horrible unfamiliar calls as they flew over my head. They passed, and alighted on the roof of the presbytery and on the church-tower, away in the distance, and the wind bore down to me their melancholy crying. Upon my word, I felt afraid! And why? Who will ever define it for me exactly? I have been under fire; I have touched more swords than one with my own; my nerves are better tempered, perhaps, than those either of the most phlegmatic or the most cowardly natures, but I declare none the less, in all humility, that I was afraid there—and afraid in good earnest.

And so in silence I drew blood from the flanks of the poor horse, and, with tight-closed eyes, with loosened reins, and with my fingers twisted in the mane and my cloak flying straight out behind me, I felt the gallop of my horse as headlong as it could be. She was going hell-for-leather. From time to time my indistinct muttering in her ear inspired her, surely and instinctively, with the superstitious horror which was making me shudder despite myself. And in this way we arrived in

less than half an hour. The rattle of the stone causeway of the outskirts made me raise my head—and breathe again!

At last! I saw houses! Lighted shops! The faces of my fellows behind the panes! I saw passers-by—I was leaving the land of nightmares behind me!

At the inn I sat myself down in front of a good fire. The talk of the carters put me into a state of mind bordering on ecstasy. I was emerging from Death. I watched the flames from between my fingers. I gulped down a glass of rum. In fact, I was resuming control of my faculties.

I felt myself returned into the life of reality.

I was even—let me admit it—a trifle ashamed of my panic.

And how tranquil I felt in my heart when I fulfilled the commission the Abbé Maucombe had laid on me! How worldly my smile as I examined the black cloth in entrusting it to the innkeeper! The hallucination was dissipated. Willingly would I have made, as Rabelais says, "the good comrade."

The cloak in question did not seem to me to be in any way extraordinary, or even peculiar, save that it was very old, and even patched, sewn up, and relined with, as it were, an extravagant affection. A deep-seated charity, no doubt, had led the Abbé Maucombe to give in alms the price of a new cloak; so, at least, I explained the circumstances to myself.

"That's a simple matter!" said the innkeeper. "The lad has to go to the village shortly. He's just going to set off. He'll take back the cloak to M. Maucombe on his way, before ten o'clock."

An hour later in my railway carriage, with my feet on the heater, and well wrapped in my own regained cloak, I said to myself as I lit a good cigar and listened to the noise of the locomotive's whistle:

"Well, certainly, that is a cry I like a good deal better than the owls!"

And I must admit that I felt a few regrets for my promise to return.

Whereupon I fell asleep at last, and soundly, completely oblivious of what I was prepared henceforth to regard as a meaningless coincidence.

I had to stop at Chartres for six days, to examine certain documents which, since then, have led to the favourable issue of our suit.

And at last, my mind obsessed with ideas of lawyers' paper-mongering and red-tape—and under the burthen of my morbid ennui—I re-

turned to Paris just on the evening of the seventh day of my departure from the presbytery.

I went straight home, and arrived there exactly at nine o'clock. Going upstairs, I found my father in the drawing-room. He was seated beside a small round table, lit by a lamp. An open letter was in his hand.

A few words passed between us, and then:

"You don't know, I'm sure," said he, "what news this letter brings me! Our dear old Abbé Maucombe has died since you left him."

At the words, I felt a violent shock.

"What!" I answered.

"Yes, he is dead. Two days ago. At midnight, three days after you left his presbytery, from a chill caught on the highroad. This letter is from old Nanon. The poor woman seems to be greatly upset, so much so that she repeats one phrase twice . . . a curious phrase about a cloak. . . . But read it for yourself!"

He handed me the letter. It told me, as he said, of the death of the saintly priest; and then I read these simple lines:

"He was very happy, he said with his last words, to be wrapped in his cloak at his last breath, and to be buried in it too. It was the cloak which he had brought back from his pilgrimage to the Holy Land, *and which had touched the Tomb.*"

Story of the Young Man with the Cream Tarts

BY ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

(*1850-1894*)

During his residence in London, the accomplished Prince Florizel of Bohemia gained the affection of all classes by the seduction of his manner and by a well-considered generosity. He was a remarkable man even by what was known of him; and that was but a small part of what he actually did. Although of a placid temper in ordinary circumstances, and accustomed to take the world with as much philosophy as any ploughman, the Prince of Bohemia was not without a taste for ways of life more adventurous and eccentric than that to which he was destined by his birth. Now and then, when he fell into a low humour, when there was no laughable play to witness in any of the London theatres, and when the season of the year was unsuitable to those field sports in which he excelled all competitors, he would summon his confidant and Master of the Horse, Colonel Geraldine, and bid him prepare himself against an evening ramble. The Master of the Horse was a young officer of a brave and even temerarious disposition. He greeted the news with delight, and hastened to make ready. Long practice and a varied acquaintance of life had given him a singular faculty in disguise; he could adapt not only his face and bearing, but his voice and almost his thoughts, to those of any rank, character, or nation; and in this way he diverted attention from the Prince, and sometimes gained admission for the pair into strange societies. The civil authorities were never taken into the secret of these adventures; the imperturbable courage of the one and the ready invention and chivalrous devotion of the other had brought them through a score of dangerous passes; and they grew in confidence as time went on.

One evening in March they were driven by a sharp fall of sleet into an Oyster Bar in the immediate neighbourhood of Leicester Square. Colonel Geraldine was dressed and painted to represent a person connected with the Press in reduced circumstances; while the Prince had, as usual, travestied his appearance by the addition of false whiskers and a pair of large adhesive eyebrows. These lent him a shaggy and weather-beaten air, which, for one of his urbanity, formed the most impenetrable disguise. Thus equipped, the commander and his satellite sipped their brandy and soda in security.

The bar was full of guests, male and female; but though more than one of these offered to fall into talk with our adventurers, none of them promised to grow interesting upon a nearer acquaintance. There was nothing present but the lees of London and the commonplace of disrespectability; and the Prince had already fallen to yawning, and was beginning to grow weary of the whole excursion, when the swing doors were pushed violently open, and a young man, followed by a couple of commissionaires, entered the bar. Each of the commissionaires carried a large dish of cream tarts under a cover, which they at once removed; and the young man made the round of the company, and pressed these confections upon everyone's acceptance with an exaggerated courtesy. Sometimes his offer was laughingly accepted; sometimes it was firmly, or even harshly, rejected. In these latter cases the new-comer always ate the tart himself, with some more or less humorous commentary.

At last he accosted Prince Florizel.

"Sir," said he, with a profound obeisance, proffering the tart at the same time between his thumb and forefinger, "will you so far humour an entire stranger? I can answer for the quality of the pastry, having eaten two dozen and three of them myself since five o'clock."

"I am in the habit," replied the Prince, "of looking not so much to the nature of a gift as to the spirit in which it is offered."

"The spirit, sir," returned the young man, with another bow, "is one of mockery."

"Mockery?" replied Florizel. "And whom do you propose to mock?"

"I am not here to expound my philosophy," replied the other, "but to distribute these cream tarts. If I mention that I heartily include myself in the ridicule of the transaction, I hope you will consider

honour satisfied and condescend. If not, you will constrain me to eat my twenty-eighth, and I own to being weary of the exercise."

"You touch me," said the Prince, "and I have all the will in the world to rescue you from this dilemma, but upon one condition. If my friend and I eat your cakes—for which we have neither of us any natural inclination—we shall expect you to join us at supper by way of recompense."

The young man seemed to reflect.

"I have still several dozen upon hand," he said at last; "and that will make it necessary for me to visit several more bars before my great affair is concluded. This will take some time; and if you are hungry—"

The Prince interrupted him with a polite gesture.

"My friend and I will accompany you," he said; "for we have already a deep interest in your very agreeable mode of passing an evening. And now that the preliminaries of peace are settled, allow me to sign the treaty for both."

And the Prince swallowed the tart with the best grace imaginable.

"It is delicious," said he.

"I perceive you are a connoisseur," replied the young man.

Colonel Geraldine likewise did honour to the pastry; and everyone in that bar having now either accepted or refused his delicacies, the young man with the cream tarts led the way to another and similar establishment. The two commissionaires, who seemed to have grown accustomed to their absurd employment, followed immediately after; and the Prince and the Colonel brought up the rear, arm in arm, and smiling to each other as they went. In this order the company visited other taverns, where scenes were enacted of a like nature to that already described—some refusing, some accepting, the favours of this vagabond hospitality, and the young man himself eating each rejected tart.

On leaving the third saloon the young man counted his store. There were but nine remaining, three in one tray and six in the other.

"Gentlemen," said he, addressing himself to his two new followers, "I am unwilling to delay your supper. I am positively sure you must be hungry. I feel that I owe you a special consideration. And on this great day for me, when I am closing a career of folly by my most conspicuously silly action, I wish to behave handsomely to all who give me countenance. Gentlemen, you shall wait no longer. Although

my constitution is shattered by previous excesses, at the risk of my life I liquidate the suspensory condition."

With these words he crushed the nine remaining tarts into his mouth, and swallowed them at a single movement each. Then, turning to the commissionaires, he gave them a couple of sovereigns.

"I have to thank you," said he, "for your extraordinary patience."

And he dismissed them with a bow apiece. For some seconds he stood looking at the purse from which he had just paid his assistants, then, with a laugh, he tossed it into the middle of the street, and signified his readiness for supper.

In a small French restaurant in Soho, which had enjoyed an exaggerated reputation for some little while, but had already begun to be forgotten, and in a private room up two pair of stairs, the three companions made a very elegant supper, and drank three or four bottles of champagne, talking the while upon indifferent subjects. The young man was fluent and gay, but he laughed louder than was natural in a person of polite breeding; his hands trembled violently, and his voice took sudden and surprising inflections, which seemed to be independent of his will. The dessert had been cleared away, and all three had lighted their cigars, when the Prince addressed him in these words:—

"You will, I am sure, pardon my curiosity. What I have seen of you has greatly pleased but even more puzzled me. And though I should be loth to seem indiscreet, I must tell you that my friend and I are persons very well worthy to be entrusted with a secret. We have many of our own, which we are continually revealing to improper ears. And if, as I suppose, your story is a silly one, you need have no delicacy with us, who are two of the silliest men in England. My name is Godall, Theophilus Godall; my friend is Major Alfred Hammersmith —or at least, such is the name by which he chooses to be known. We pass our lives entirely in the search for extravagant adventures; and there is no extravagance with which we are not capable of sympathy."

"I like you, Mr. Godall," returned the young man; "you inspire me with a natural confidence; and I have not the slightest objection to your friend the Major, whom I take to be a nobleman in masquerade. At least, I am sure he is no soldier."

The Colonel smiled at this compliment to the perfection of his art; and the young man went on in a more animated manner.

"There is every reason why I should not tell you my story. Perhaps

that is just the reason why I am going to do so. At least, you seem so well prepared to hear a tale of silliness that I cannot find it in my heart to disappoint you. My name in spite of your example, I shall keep to myself. My age is not essential to the narrative. I am descended from my ancestors by ordinary generation, and from them I inherited the very eligible human tenement which I still occupy and a fortune of three hundred pounds a year. I suppose they also handed on to me a hare-brain humour, which it has been my chief delight to indulge. I received a good education. I can play the violin nearly well enough to earn money in the orchestra of a penny gaff, but not quite. The same remark applies to the flute and the French horn. I learned enough of whist to lose about a hundred a year at that scientific game. My acquaintance with French was sufficient to enable me to squander money in Paris with almost the same facility as in London. In short, I am a person full of manly accomplishments. I have had every sort of adventure, including a duel about nothing. Only two months ago I met a young lady exactly suited to my taste in mind and body; I found my heart melt; I saw that I had come upon my fate at last, and was in the way to fall in love. But when I came to reckon up what remained to me of my capital, I found it amounted to something less than four hundred pounds! I ask you fairly—can a man who respects himself fall in love on four hundred pounds? I concluded, certainly not; left the presence of my charmer, and slightly accelerating my usual rate of expenditure, came this morning to my last eighty pounds. This I divided into two equal parts; forty I reserved for a particular purpose; the remaining forty I was to dissipate before the night. I have passed a very entertaining day, and played many farces besides that of the cream tarts which procured me the advantage of your acquaintance; for I was determined, as I told you, to bring a foolish career to a still more foolish conclusion; and when you saw me throw my purse into the street, the forty pounds were at an end. Now you know me as well as I know myself: a fool, but consistent in his folly; and, as I will ask you to believe, neither a whimperer nor a coward."

From the whole tone of the young man's statement it was plain that he harboured very bitter and contemptuous thoughts about himself. His auditors were led to imagine that his love affair was nearer his heart than he admitted, and that he had a design on his own life. The

farce of the cream tarts began to have very much the air of a tragedy in disguise.

"Why, is this not odd," broke out Geraldine, giving a look to Prince Florizel, "that we three fellows should have met by the merest accident in so large a wilderness as London, and should be so nearly in the same condition?"

"How?" cried the young man. "Are you, too, ruined? Is this supper a folly like my cream tarts? Has the devil brought three of his own together for a last carouse?"

"The devil, depend upon it, can sometimes do a very gentlemanly thing," returned Prince Florizel; "and I am so much touched by this coincidence, that, although we are not entirely in the same case, I am going to put an end to the disparity. Let your heroic treatment of the last cream tarts be my example."

So saying, the Prince drew out his purse and took from it a small bundle of bank-notes.

"You see, I was a week or so behind you, but I mean to catch you up and come neck and neck into the winning-post," he continued. "This," laying one of the notes upon the table, "will suffice for the bill. As for the rest—"

He tossed them into the fire, and they went up the chimney in a single blaze.

The young man tried to catch his arm, but as the table was between them his interference came too late.

"Unhappy man," he cried, "you should not have burned them all; you should have kept forty pounds."

"Forty pounds!" repeated the Prince. "Why, in heaven's name, forty pounds?"

"Why not eighty?" cried the Colonel; "for to my certain knowledge there must have been a hundred in the bundle."

"It was only forty pounds he needed," said the young man gloomily. "But without them there is no admission. The rule is strict. Forty pounds for each. Accursed life, where a man cannot even die without money!"

The Prince and the Colonel exchanged glances.

"Explain yourself," said the latter. "I have still a pocket-book tolerably well lined, and I need not say how readily I should share

my wealth with Godall. But I must know to what end; you must certainly tell us what you mean."

The young man seemed to awaken; he looked uneasily from one to the other, and his face flushed deeply.

"You are not fooling me?" he asked. "You are indeed ruined men like me?"

"Indeed, I am for my part," replied the Colonel.

"And for mine," said the Prince, "I have given you proof. Who but a ruined man would throw his notes into the fire? The action speaks for itself."

"A ruined man—yes," returned the other suspiciously, "or else a millionaire."

"Enough, sir," said the Prince; "I have said so, and I am not accustomed to have my word remain in doubt."

"Ruined?" said the young man. "Are you ruined, like me? Are you, after a life of indulgence, come to such a pass that you can only indulge yourself in one thing more? Are you"—he kept lowering his voice as he went on—"are you going to give yourselves that last indulgence? Are you going to avoid the consequences of your folly by the one infallible and easy path? Are you going to give the slip to the sheriff's officers of conscience by the one open door?"

Suddenly he broke off and attempted to laugh.

"Here is your health!" he cried, emptying his glass, "and good night to you, my merry ruined men."

Colonel Geraldine caught him by the arm as he was about to rise.

"You lack confidence in us," he said, "and you are wrong. To all your questions I make answer in the affirmative. But I am not so timid, and can speak the Queen's English plainly. We too, like yourself, have had enough of life, and are determined to die. Sooner or later, alone or together, we meant to seek out death and beard him where he lies ready. Since we have met you, and your case is more pressing, let it be tonight—and at once—and, if you will, all three together. Such a penniless trio," he cried, "should go arm in arm into the hall of Pluto, and give each other some countenance among the shades!"

Geraldine had hit exactly on the manners and intonations that became the part he was playing. The Prince himself was disturbed, and looked over at his confidant with a shade of doubt. As for the young

man, the flush came back darkly into his cheek, and his eyes threw out a spark of light.

"You are the men for me!" he cried, with an almost terrible gaiety. "Shake hands upon the bargain!" (his hand was cold and wet). "You little know in what a company you will begin the march! You little know in what a happy moment for yourselves you partook of my cream tarts! I am only a unit, but I am a unit in an army. I know Death's private door. I am one of his familiars, and can show you into eternity without ceremony and yet without scandal."

They called upon him eagerly to explain his meaning.

"Can you muster eighty pounds between you?" he demanded.

Geraldine ostentatiously consulted his pocket-book, and replied in the affirmative.

"Fortunate beings!" cried the young man. "Forty pounds is the entry money of the Suicide Club."

"The Suicide Club," said the Prince, "why, what the devil is that?"

"Listen," said the young man; "this is the age of convenience, and I have to tell you of the last perfection of the sort. We have affairs in different places; and hence railways were invented. Railways separated us infallibly from our friends; and so telegraphs were made that we might communicate speedily at great distances. Even in hotels we have lifts to spare us a climb of some hundred steps. Now, we know that life is only a stage to play the fool upon as long as the part amuses us. There was one more convenience lacking to modern comfort; a decent, easy way to quit that stage; the back stairs to liberty; or, as I said this moment, Death's private door. This, my two fellow-rebels, is supplied by the Suicide Club. Do not suppose that you and I are alone, or even exceptional, in the highly reasonable desire that we profess. A large number of our fellowmen, who have grown heartily sick of the performance in which they are expected to join daily and all their lives long, are only kept from flight by one or two considerations. Some have families who would be shocked, or even blamed, if the matter became public; others have a weakness at heart and recoil from the circumstances of death. That is, to some extent, my own experience. I cannot put a pistol to my head and draw the trigger; for something stronger than myself withholds the act; and although I loathe life, I have not strength enough in my body to take hold of death and be done with it. For such as I, and for all who desire to

be out of the coil without posthumous scandal, the Suicide Club has been inaugurated. How this has been managed, what is its history, or what may be its ramifications in other lands, I am myself uninformed; and what I know of its constitution, I am not at liberty to communicate to you. To this extent, however, I am at your service. If you are truly tired of life, I will introduce you tonight to a meeting; and if not tonight, at least some time within the week, you will be easily relieved of your existences. It is now (consulting his watch) eleven; by half-past, at latest, we must leave this place; so that you have half-an-hour before you to consider my proposal. It is more serious than a cream tart," he added, with a smile; "and I suspect more palatable."

"More serious, certainly," returned Colonel Geraldine; "and as it is so much more so, will you allow me five minutes' speech in private with my friend, Mr. Godall?"

"It is only fair," answered the young man. "If you will permit, I will retire."

"You will be very obliging," said the Colonel.

As soon as the two were alone—"What," said Prince Florizel, "is the use of this confabulation, Geraldine? I see you are flurried, whereas my mind is very tranquilly made up. I will see the end of this."

"Your Highness," said the Colonel, turning pale; "let me ask you to consider the importance of your life, not only to your friends, but to the public interest. 'If not tonight,' said this madman; but supposing that tonight some irreparable disaster were to overtake your Highness's person, what, let me ask you, what would be my despair, and what the concern and disaster of a great nation?"

"I will see the end of this," repeated the Prince in his most deliberate tones; "and have the kindness, Colonel Geraldine, to remember and respect your word of honour as a gentleman. Under no circumstances, recollect, nor without my special authority, are you to betray the incognito under which I choose to go abroad. These were my commands, which I now reiterate. And now," he added, "let me ask you to call for the bill."

Colonel Geraldine bowed in submission; but he had a very white face as he summoned the young man of the cream tarts, and issued his directions to the waiter. The Prince preserved his undisturbed demeanour, and described a Palais Royal farce to the young suicide

with great humour and gusto. He avoided the Colonel's appealing looks without ostentation, and selected another cheroot with more than usual care. Indeed, he was now the only man of the party who kept any command over his nerves.

The bill was discharged, the Prince giving the whole change of the note to the astonished waiter; and the three drove off in a four wheeler. They were not long upon the way before the cab stopped at the entrance to a rather dark court. Here all descended.

After Geraldine had paid the fare, the young man turned, and addressed Prince Florizel as follows:—

"It is still time, Mr. Godall, to make good your escape into thraldom. And for you too, Major Hammersmith. Reflect well before you take another step; and if your hearts say no—here are the cross-roads."

"Lead on, sir," said the Prince. "I am not the man to go back from a thing once said."

"Your coolness does me good," replied their guide. "I have never seen any one so unmoved at this conjuncture; and yet you are not the first whom I have escorted to this door. More than one of my friends has preceded me, where I knew I must shortly follow. But this is of no interest to you. Wait me here for only a few moments; I shall return as soon as I have arranged the preliminaries of your introduction."

And with that the young man, waving his hand to his companions, turned into the court, entered a doorway and disappeared.

"Of all our follies," said Colonel Geraldine in a low voice, "this is the wildest and most dangerous."

"I perfectly believe so," returned the Prince.

"We have still," pursued the Colonel, "a moment to ourselves. Let me beseech your Highness to profit by the opportunity and retire. The consequences of this step are so dark, and may be so grave, that I feel myself justified in pushing a little farther than usual the liberty which your Highness is so condescending as to allow me in private."

"Am I to understand that Colonel Geraldine is afraid?" asked his Highness, taking his cheroot from his lips, and looking keenly into the other's face.

"My fear is certainly not personal," replied the other proudly; "of that your Highness may rest well assured."

"I had supposed as much," returned the Prince, with undisturbed

good humour; "but I was unwilling to remind you of the difference in our stations. No more—no more," he added, seeing Geraldine about to apologise, "you stand excused."

And he smoked placidly, leaning against a railing, until the young man returned.

"Well," he asked, "has our reception been arranged?"

"Follow me," was the reply. "The President will see you in the cabinet. And let me warn you to be frank in your answers. I have stood your guarantee; but the club requires a searching inquiry before admission; for the indiscretion of a single member would lead to the dispersion of the whole society for ever."

The Prince and Geraldine put their heads together for a moment. "Bear me out in this," said the one; and "bear me out in that," said the other; and by boldly taking up the characters of men with whom both were acquainted, they had come to an agreement in a twinkling, and were ready to follow their guide into the President's cabinet.

There were no formidable obstacles to pass. The outer door stood open; the door of the cabinet was ajar; and there, in a small but very high apartment, the young man left them once more.

"He will be here immediately," he said, with a nod, as he disappeared.

Voices were audible in the cabinet through the folding doors which formed one end; and now and then the noise of a champagne cork, followed by a burst of laughter, intervened among the sounds of conversation. A single tall window looked out upon the river and the embankment; and by the disposition of the lights they judged themselves not far from Charing Cross station. The furniture was scanty, and the coverings worn to the thread; and there was nothing movable except a hand-bell in the centre of a round table, and the hats and coats of a considerable party hung round the wall on pegs.

"What sort of a den is this?" said Geraldine.

"That is what I have come to see," replied the Prince. "If they keep live devils on the premises, the thing may grow amusing."

Just then the folding door was opened no more than was necessary for the passage of a human body; and there entered at the same moment a louder buzz of talk, and the redoubtable President of the Suicide Club. The President was a man of fifty upwards; large and rambling in his gait, with shaggy side whiskers, a bald top to his head, and a

veiled grey eye, which now and then emitted a twinkle. His mouth, which embraced a large cigar, he kept continually screwing round and round and from side to side, as he looked sagaciously and coldly at the strangers. He was dressed in light tweeds, with his neck very open in a striped shirt collar; and carried a minute book under one arm.

"Good evening," said he, after he had closed the door behind him. "I am told you wish to speak with me."

"We have a desire, sir, to join the Suicide Club," replied the Colonel.

The President rolled his cigar about his mouth.

"What is that?" he said abruptly.

"Pardon me," returned the Colonel, "but I believe you are the person best qualified to give us information on that point."

"I?" cried the President. "A Suicide Club? Come, come! this is a frolic for All Fools' Day. I can make allowance for gentlemen who get merry in their liquor; but let there be an end to this."

"Call your Club what you will," said the Colonel, "you have some company behind these doors, and we insist on joining it."

"Sir," returned the President, curtly, "you have made a mistake. This is a private house, and you must leave it instantly."

The Prince had remained quietly in his seat throughout this little colloquy; but now, when the Colonel looked over to him, as much as to say, "Take your answer and come away, for God's sake!" he drew his cheroot from his mouth, and spoke—

"I have come here," said he, "upon the invitation of a friend of yours. He has doubtless informed you of my intention in thus intruding on your party. Let me remind you that a person in my circumstances has exceedingly little to bind him, and is not at all likely to tolerate much rudeness. I am a very quiet man, as a usual thing; but, my dear sir, you are either going to oblige me in the little matter of which you are aware, or you shall very bitterly repent that you ever admitted me to your ante-chamber."

The President laughed aloud.

"That is the way to speak," said he. "You are a man who is a man. You know the way to my heart, and can do what you like with me. Will you," he continued, addressing Geraldine, "will you step aside for a few minutes? I shall finish first with your companion, and some of the club's formalities require to be fulfilled in private."

With these words he opened the door of a small closet, into which he shut the Colonel.

"I believe in you," he said to Florizel as soon as they were alone; "but are you sure of your friend?"

"Not so sure as I am of myself, though he has more cogent reasons," answered Florizel, "but sure enough to bring him here without alarm. He has had enough to cure the most tenacious man of life. He was cashiered the other day for cheating at cards."

"A good reason, I daresay," replied the President; "at least, we have another in the same case, and I feel sure of him. Have you also been in the Service, may I ask?"

"I have," was the reply; "but I was too lazy, I left it early."

"What is your reason for being tired of life?" pursued the President.

"The same, as near as I can make out," answered the Prince; "unadulterated laziness."

The President started. "D—n it," said he, "you must have something better than that."

"I have no more money," added Florizel. "That is also a vexation, without doubt. It brings my sense of idleness to an acute point."

The President rolled his cigar round in his mouth for some seconds, directing his gaze straight into the eyes of this unusual neophyte; but the Prince supported his scrutiny with unabashed good temper.

"If I had not a deal of experience," said the President at last, "I should turn you off. But I know the world; and this much anyway, that the most frivolous excuses for a suicide are often the toughest to stand by. And when I downright like a man, as I do you, sir, I would rather strain the regulation than deny him."

The Prince and the Colonel, one after the other, were subjected to a long and particular interrogatory: the Prince alone; but Geraldine in the presence of the Prince, so that the President might observe the countenance of the one while the other was being warmly cross-examined. The result was satisfactory; and the President, after having booked a few details of each case, produced a form of oath to be accepted. Nothing could be conceived more passive than the obedience promised, or more stringent than the terms by which the juror bound himself. The man who forfeited a pledge so awful could scarcely have a rag of honour or any of the consolations of religion left to him. Florizel signed the document, but not without a shudder; the Colonel

followed his example with an air of great depression. Then the President received the entry money; and without more ado, introduced the two friends into the smoking-room of the Suicide Club.

The smoking-room of the Suicide Club was the same height as the cabinet into which it opened, but much larger, and papered from top to bottom with an imitation of oak wainscot. A large and cheerful fire and a number of gas-jets illuminated the company. The Prince and his follower made the number up to eighteen. Most of the party were smoking, and drinking champagne; a feverish hilarity reigned, with sudden and rather ghastly pauses.

"Is this a full meeting?" asked the Prince.

"Middling," said the President. "By the way," he added, "if you have any money, it is usual to offer some champagne. It keeps up a good spirit, and is one of my own little perquisites."

"Hammersmith," said Florizel, "I may leave the champagne to you."

And with that he turned away and began to go round among the guests. Accustomed to play the host in the highest circles, he charmed and dominated all whom he approached; there was something at once winning and authoritative in his address; and his extraordinary coolness gave him yet another distinction in this half maniacal society. As he went from one to another he kept both his eyes and ears open, and soon began to gain a general idea of the people among whom he found himself. As in all other places of resort, one type predominated: people in the prime of youth, with every show of intelligence and sensibility in their appearance, but with little promise of strength or the quality that makes success. Few were much above thirty, and not a few were still in their teens. They stood, leaning on tables and shifting on their feet; sometimes they smoked extraordinarily fast, and sometimes they let their cigars go out; some talked well, but the conversation of others was plainly the result of nervous tension, and was equally without wit or purport. As each new bottle of champagne was opened, there was a manifest improvement in gaiety. Only two were seated—one in a chair in the recess of the window, with his head hanging and his hands plunged deep into his trouser pockets, pale, visibly moist with perspiration, saying never a word, a very wreck of soul and body; the other sat on the divan close by the chimney, and attracted notice by a trenchant dissimilarity from all the rest. He was probably upwards of forty, but he looked fully ten years older; and Florizel thought

he had never seen a man more naturally hideous, nor one more ravaged by disease and ruinous excitements. He was no more than skin and bone, was partly paralysed, and wore spectacles of such unusual power, that his eyes appeared through the glasses greatly magnified and distorted in shape. Except the Prince and the President, he was the only person in the room who preserved the composure of ordinary life.

There was little decency among the members of the club. Some boasted of the disgraceful actions, the consequences of which had reduced them to seek refuge in death; and the others listened without disapproval. There was a tacit understanding against moral judgments; and whoever passed the club doors enjoyed already some of the immunities of the tomb. They drank to each other's memories, and to those of notable suicides in the past. They compared and developed their different views of death—some declaring that it was no more than blackness and cessation; others full of a hope that that very night they should be scaling the stars and commercing with the mighty dead.

"To the eternal memory of Baron Trenck, the type of suicides!" cried one. "He went out of a small cell into a smaller, that he might come forth again to freedom."

"For my part," said a second, "I wish no more than a bandage for my eyes and cotton for my ears. Only they have no cotton thick enough in this world."

A third was for reading the mysteries of life in a future state; and a fourth professed that he would never have joined the club, if he had not been induced to believe in Mr. Darwin.

"I could not bear," said this remarkable suicide, "to be descended from an ape."

Altogether, the Prince was disappointed by the bearing and conversation of the members.

"It does not seem to me," he thought, "a matter for so much disturbance. If a man has made up his mind to kill himself, let him do it, in God's name, like a gentleman. This flutter and big talk is out of place."

In the meanwhile Colonel Geraldine was a prey to the blackest apprehensions; the club and its rules were still a mystery, and he looked round the room for some one who should be able to set his mind at rest. In this survey his eye lighted on the paralytic person with the strong spectacles; and seeing him so exceedingly tranquil, he besought

the President, who was going in and out of the room under a pressure of business, to present him to the gentleman on the divan.

The functionary explained the needlessness of all such formalities within the club, but nevertheless presented Mr. Hammersmith to Mr. Malthus.

Mr. Malthus looked at the Colonel curiously, and then requested him to take a seat upon his right.

"You are a new-comer," he said, "and wish information? You have come to the proper source. It is two years since I first visited this charming club."

The Colonel breathed again. If Mr. Malthus had frequented the place for two years there could be little danger for the Prince in a single evening. But Geraldine was none the less astonished, and began to suspect a mystification.

"What!" cried he, "two years! I thought—but indeed I see I have been made the subject of a pleasantry."

"By no means," replied Mr. Malthus mildly. "My case is peculiar. I am not, properly speaking, a suicide at all; but, as it were, an honorary member. I rarely visit the club twice in two months. My infirmity and the kindness of the President have procured me these little immunities, for which besides I pay at an advanced rate. Even as it is my luck has been extraordinary."

"I am afraid," said the Colonel, "that I must ask you to be more explicit. You must remember that I am still most imperfectly acquainted with the rules of the club."

"An ordinary member who comes here in search of death like yourself," replied the paralytic, "returns every evening until fortune favours him. He can even, if he is penniless, get board and lodging from the President: very fair, I believe, and clean, although, of course, not luxurious; that could hardly be, considering the exiguity (if I may so express myself) of the subscription. And then the President's company is a delicacy in itself."

"Indeed!" cried Geraldine, "he had not greatly prepossessed me."

"Ah!" said Mr. Malthus, "you do not know the man: the drollest fellow! What stories! What cynicism! He knows life to admiration and, between ourselves, is probably the most corrupt rogue in Christendom."

"And he also," asked the Colonel, "is a permanency—like yourself, if I may say so without offence?"

"Indeed, he is a permanency in a very different sense from me," replied Mr. Malthus. "I have been graciously spared, but I must go at last. Now he never plays. He shuffles and deals for the club, and makes the necessary arrangements. That man, my dear Mr. Hammersmith, is the very soul of ingenuity. For three years he has pursued in London his useful and, I think I may add, his artistic calling; and not so much as a whisper of suspicion has been once aroused. I believe him myself to be inspired. You doubtless remember the celebrated case, six months ago, of the gentleman who was accidentally poisoned in a chemist's shop? That was one of the least rich, one of the least racy, of his notions; but then, how simple! and how safe!"

"You astound me," said the Colonel. "Was that unfortunate gentleman one of the—" He was about to say "victims"; but bethinking himself in time, he substituted—"members of the club?"

In the same flash of thought, it occurred to him that Mr. Malthus himself had not at all spoken in the tone of one who is in love with death; and he added hurriedly:

"But I perceive I am still in the dark. You speak of shuffling and dealing; pray for what end? And since you seem rather unwilling to die than otherwise, I must own that I cannot conceive what brings you here at all."

"You say truly that you are in the dark," replied Mr. Malthus with more animation. "Why, my dear sir, this club is the temple of intoxication. If my enfeebled health could support the excitement more often, you may depend on it I should be more often here. It requires all the sense of duty engendered by a long habit of ill-health and careful regimen, to keep me from excess in this, which is, I may say, my dissipation. I have tried them all, sir," he went on, laying his hand on Geraldine's arm, "all without exception, and I declare to you, upon my honour, there is not one of them that has not been grossly and untruthfully overrated. People trifle with love. Now, I deny that love is a strong passion. Fear is the strong passion; it is with fear that you must trifle, if you wish to taste the intensest joys of living. Envy me—envy me, sir," he added with a chuckle, "I am a coward!"

Geraldine could scarcely repress a movement of repulsion for this

deplorable wretch; but he commanded himself with an effort, and continued his inquiries.

"How, sir," he asked, "is the excitement so artfully prolonged? and where is there any element of uncertainty?"

"I must tell you how the victim for every evening is selected," returned Mr. Malthus; "and not only the victim, but another member, who is to be the instrument in the club's hands, and death's high priest for that occasion."

"Good God!" said the Colonel, "do they then kill each other?"

"The trouble of suicide is removed in that way," returned Malthus with a nod.

"Merciful heavens!" ejaculated the Colonel, "and may you—may I —may the—my friend I mean—may any of us be pitched upon this evening as the slayer of another man's body and immortal spirit? Can such things be possible among men born of women? Oh! infamy of infamies!"

He was about to rise in his horror, when he caught the Prince's eye. It was fixed upon him from across the room with a frowning and angry stare. And in a moment Geraldine recovered his composure.

"After all," he added, "why not? And since you say the game is interesting, *vogue la galère*—I follow the club!"

Mr. Malthus had keenly enjoyed the Colonel's amazement and disgust. He had the vanity of wickedness; and it pleased him to see another man give way to a generous movement, while he felt himself, in his entire corruption, superior to such emotions.

"You now, after your first moment of surprise," said he, "are in a position to appreciate the delights of our society. You can see how it combines the excitement of a gaming-table, a duel, and a Roman amphitheatre. The Pagans did well enough; I cordially admire the refinement of their minds; but it has been reserved for a Christian country to attain this extreme, this quintessence, this absolute of poignancy. You will understand how vapid are all amusements to a man who has acquired a taste for this one. The game we play," he continued, "is one of extreme simplicity. A full pack—but I perceive you are about to see the thing in progress. Will you lend me the help of your arm? I am unfortunately paralysed."

Indeed, just as Mr. Malthus was beginning his description, another pair of folding-doors was thrown open, and the whole club began to

ass, not without some hurry, into the adjoining room. It was similar n every respect to the one from which it was entered, but somewhat ifferently furnished. The centre was occupied by a long green table, t which the President sat shuffling a pack of cards with great partic- larity. Even with the stick and the Colonel's arm, Mr. Malthus valked with so much difficulty that every one was seated before this air and the Prince, who had waited for them, entered the apartment; nd, in consequence, the three took seats close together at the lower nd of the board.

"It is a pack of fifty-two," whispered Mr. Malthus. "Watch for he ace of spades, which is the sign of death, and the ace of clubs, which esignates the official of the night. Happy, happy young men!" he dded. "You have good eyes, and can follow the game. Alas! I annot tell an ace from a deuce across the table."

And he proceeded to equip himself with a second pair of spectacles.

"I must at least watch the faces," he explained.

The Colonel rapidly informed his friend of all that he had learned rom the honorary member, and of the horrible alternative that lay efore them. The Prince was conscious of a deadly chill and a con- raction about his heart; he swallowed with difficulty, and looked from ide to side like a man in a maze.

"One bold stroke," whispered the Colonel, "and we may still escape."

But the suggestion recalled the Prince's spirits.

"Silence!" said he. "Let me see that you can play like a gentleman or any stake, however serious."

And he looked about him, once more to all appearance at his ease, lthough his heart beat thickly, and he was conscious of an unpleasant eat in his bosom. The members were all very quiet and intent; every ne was pale, but none so pale as Mr. Malthus. His eyes protruded; is head kept nodding involuntarily upon his spine; his hands found heir way, one after the other, to his mouth, where they made clutches t his tremulous and ashen lips. It was plain that the honorary mem- er enjoyed his membership on very startling terms.

"Attention, gentlemen!" said the President.

And he began slowly dealing the cards about the table in the reverse irection, pausing until each man had shown his card. Nearly every ne hesitated; and sometimes you would see a player's fingers stumble nore than once before he could turn over the momentous slip of paste-

board. As the Prince's turn drew nearer, he was conscious of a growing and almost suffocating excitement; but he had somewhat of the gambler's nature, and recognised almost with astonishment that there was a degree of pleasure in his sensations. The nine of clubs fell to his lot; the three of spades was dealt to Geraldine; and the queen of hearts to Mr. Malthus, who was unable to suppress a sob of relief. The young man of the cream tarts almost immediately afterwards turned over the ace of clubs, and remained frozen with horror, the card still resting on his finger; he had not come there to kill, but to be killed; and the Prince in his generous sympathy with his position almost forgot the peril that still hung over himself and his friend.

The deal was coming round again, and still Death's card had not come out. The players held their respiration, and only breathed by gasps. The Prince received another club; Geraldine had a diamond; but when Mr. Malthus turned up his card a horrible noise, like that of something breaking, issued from his mouth; and he rose from his seat and sat down again, with no sign of his paralysis. It was the ace of spades. The honorary member had trifled once too often with his terrors.

Conversation broke out again almost at once. The players relaxed their rigid attitudes, and began to rise from the table and stroll back by twos and threes into the smoking-room. The President stretched his arms and yawned, like a man who had finished his day's work. But Mr. Malthus sat in his place, with his head in his hands, and his hands upon the table, drunk and motionless—a thing stricken down.

The Prince and Geraldine made their escape at once. In the cold night air their horror of what they had witnessed was redoubled.

"Alas!" cried the Prince, "to be bound by an oath in such a matter! to allow this wholesale trade in murder to be continued with profit and impunity! If I but dared to forfeit my pledge!"

"That is impossible for your Highness," replied the Colonel, "whose honour is the honour of Bohemia. But I dare, and may with propriety, forfeit mine."

"Geraldine," said the Prince, "if your honour suffers in any of the adventures into which you follow me, not only will I never pardon you, but—what I believe will much more sensibly affect you—I should never forgive myself."

"I receive your Highness's commands," replied the Colonel. "Shall e go from this accursed spot?"

"Yes," said the Prince. "Call a cab in Heaven's name, and let me y to forget in slumber the memory of this night's disgrace."

But it was notable that he carefully read the name of the court efore he left it.

The next morning, as soon as the Prince was stirring, Colonel Ger- ldine brought him a daily newspaper, with the following paragraph arked:—

"Melancholy Accident.—This morning, about two o'clock, Mr. artholomew Malthus, of 16 Chepstow Place, Westbourne Grove, on is way home from a party at a friend's house, fell over the upper para- et in Trafalgar Square, fracturing his skull and breaking a leg and n arm. Death was instantaneous. Mr. Malthus, accompanied by a riend, was engaged in looking for a cab at the time of the unfortunate ccurrence. As Mr. Malthus was paralytic, it is thought that his fall ay have been occasioned by another seizure. The unhappy gentle- an was well known in the most respectable circles, and his loss will e widely and deeply deplored."

"If ever a soul went straight to Hell," said Geraldine solemnly, "it as that paralytic man's."

The Prince buried his face in his hands, and remained silent.

"I am almost rejoiced," continued the Colonel, "to know that he is ead. But for our young man of the cream tarts I confess my heart leeds."

"Geraldine," said the Prince, raising his face, "that unhappy lad as last night as innocent as you and I; and this morning the guilt f blood is on his soul. When I think of the President, my heart ows sick within me. I do not know how it shall be done, but I shall ave that scoundrel at my mercy as there is a God in heaven. What n experience, what a lesson, was that game of cards!"

"One," said the Colonel, "never to be repeated."

The Prince remained so long without replying, that Geraldine grew armed.

"You cannot mean to return," he said. "You have suffered too much d seen too much horror already. The duties of your high position rbid the repetition of the hazard."

"There is much in what you say," replied Prince Florizel, "and I am not altogether pleased with my own determination. Alas! in the clothes of the greatest potentate, what is there but a man? I never felt my weakness more acutely than now, Geraldine, but it is stronger than I. Can I cease to interest myself in the fortunes of the unhappy young man who supped with us some hours ago? Can I leave the President to follow his nefarious career unwatched? Can I begin an adventure so entrancing, and not follow it to an end? No, Geraldine: you ask of the Prince more than the man is able to perform. Tonight, once more, we take our places at the table of the Suicide Club."

Colonel Geraldine fell upon his knees.

"Will your Highness take my life?" he cried. "It is his—freely; but do not, O do not! let him ask me to countenance so terrible a risk."

"Colonel Geraldine," replied the Prince, with some haughtiness of manner, "your life is absolutely your own. I only looked for obedience; and when that is unwillingly rendered, I shall look for that no longer. I add one word: your importunity in this affair has been sufficient."

The Master of the Horse regained his feet at once.

"Your Highness," he said, "may I be excused in my attendance this afternoon? I dare not, as an honourable man, venture a second time into that fatal house until I have perfectly ordered my affairs. Your Highness shall meet, I promise him, with no more opposition from the most devoted and grateful of his servants."

"My dear Geraldine," returned Prince Florizel, "I always regret when you oblige me to remember my rank. Dispose of your day as you think fit, but be here before eleven in the same disguise."

The club, on this second evening, was not so fully attended; and when Geraldine and the Prince arrived, there were not above half-a-dozen persons in the smoking-room. His Highness took the President aside and congratulated him warmly on the demise of Mr. Malthus.

"I like," he said, "to meet with capacity, and certainly find much of it in you. Your profession is of a very delicate nature, but I see you are well qualified to conduct it with success and secrecy."

The President was somewhat affected by these compliments from one of his Highness's superior bearing. He acknowledged them almost with humility.

"Poor Malthy!" he added, "I shall hardly know the club without him. The most of my patrons are boys, sir, and poetical boys, who are

ot much company for me. Not but what Malthy had some poetry, oo; but it was of a kind that I could understand."

"I can readily imagine you should find yourself in sympathy with Ir. Malthus," returned the Prince. "He struck me as a man of a very riginal disposition."

The young man of the cream tarts was in the room, but painfully dressed and silent. His late companions sought in vain to lead him nto conversation.

"How bitterly I wish," he cried, "that I had never brought you to nis infamous abode! Begone, while you are clean-handed. If you ould have heard the old man scream as he fell, and the noise of his ones upon the pavement! Wish me, if you have any kindness to so allen a being—wish the ace of spades for me tonight!"

A few more members dropped in as the evening went on, but the lub did not muster more than the devil's dozen when they took neir places at the table. The Prince was again conscious of a certain oy in his alarms; but he was astonished to see Geraldine so much more elf-possessed than on the night before.

"It is extraordinary," thought the Prince, "that a will, made or nmade, should so greatly influence a young man's spirit."

"Attention, gentlemen!" said the President, and he began to deal. Three times the cards went all round the table, and neither of the narked cards had yet fallen from his hand. The excitement as he egan the fourth distribution was overwhelming. There were just ards enough to go once more entirely round. The Prince, who sat econd from the dealer's left, would receive, in the reverse mode of ealing practised at the club, the second last card. The third player urned up a black ace—it was the ace of clubs. The next received a iamond, the next a heart, and so on; but the ace of spades was still ndelivered. At last, Geraldine, who sat upon the Prince's left, turned is card; it was the ace, but the ace of hearts.

When Prince Florizel saw his fate upon the table in front of him, is heart stood still. He was a brave man, but the sweat poured off his ace. There were exactly fifty chances out of a hundred that he was doomed. He reversed the card; it was the ace of spades. A loud aring filled his brain, and the table swam before his eyes. He heard ne player on his right break into a fit of laughter that sounded beween mirth and disappointment; he saw the company rapidly dis-

persing, but his mind was full of other thoughts. He recognised how foolish, how criminal, had been his conduct. In perfect health, in the prime of his years, the heir to a throne, he had gambled away his future and that of a brave and loyal country. "God," he cried, "God forgive me!" And with that, the confusion of his senses passed away, and he regained his self-possession in a moment.

To his surprise Geraldine had disappeared. There was no one in the card-room but his destined butcher consulting with the President, and the young man with the cream tarts, who slipped up to the Prince, and whispered in his ear:—

"I would give a million, if I had it, for your luck."

His Highness could not help reflecting, as the young man departed, that he would have sold his opportunity for a much more moderate sum.

The whispered conference now came to an end. The holder of the ace of clubs left the room with a look of intelligence, and the President, approaching the unfortunate Prince, proffered his hand.

"I am pleased to have met you, sir," said he, "and pleased to have been in a position to do you this trifling service. At least, you cannot complain of delay. On the second evening—what a stroke of luck!"

The Prince endeavoured in vain to articulate something in response, but his mouth was dry and his tongue seemed paralysed.

"You feel a little sickish?" asked the President, with some show of solicitude. "Most gentlemen do. Will you take a little brandy?"

The Prince signified in the affirmative, and the other immediately filled some of the spirit into a tumbler.

"Poor old Malthy!" ejaculated the President, as the Prince drained the glass. "He drank near upon a pint, and little enough good it seemed to do him!"

"I am more amenable to treatment," said the Prince, a good deal revived. "I am my own man again at once, as you perceive. And so, let me ask you, what are my directions?"

"You will proceed along the Strand in the direction of the City, and on the left-hand pavement, until you meet the gentleman who has just left the room. He will continue your instructions, and him you will have the kindness to obey; the authority of the club is vested in his person for the night. And now," added the President, "I wish you a pleasant walk."

Florizel acknowledged the salutation rather awkwardly, and took his ave. He passed the smoking-room, where the bulk of the players ere still consuming champagne, some of which he had himself ordered nd paid for; and he was surprised to find himself cursing them in his eart. He put on his hat and greatcoat in the cabinet, and selected his mbrella from a corner. The familiarity of these acts, and the thought hat he was about them for the last time, betrayed him into a fit of aughter which sounded unpleasantly in his own ears. He conceived a eluctance to leave the cabinet, and turned instead to the window. he sight of the lamps and the darkness recalled him to himself.

"Come, come, I must be a man," he thought, "and tear myself way."

At the corner of Box Court three men fell upon Prince Florizel and e was unceremoniously thrust into a carriage, which at once drove apidly away. There was already an occupant.

"Will your Highness pardon my zeal?" said a well-known voice.

The Prince threw himself upon the Colonel's neck in a passion of elief.

"How can I ever thank you?" he cried. "And how was this ffected?"

Although he had been willing to march upon his doom, he was over-oyed to yield to friendly violence, and return once more to life and ope.

"You can thank me effectually enough," replied the Colonel, "by voiding all such dangers in the future. And as for your second uestion, all has been managed by the simplest means. I arranged his afternoon with a celebrated detective. Secrecy has been promised nd paid for. Your own servants have been principally engaged in the ffair. The house in Box Court has been surrounded since nightfall, nd this, which is one of your own carriages, has been awaiting you or nearly an hour."

"And the miserable creature who was to have slain me—what of im?" inquired the Prince.

"He was pinioned as he left the club," replied the Colonel, "and ow awaits your sentence at the Palace, where he will soon be joined y his accomplices."

"Geraldine," said the Prince, "you have saved me against my explicit rders, and you have done well. I owe you not only my life, but a

lesson; and I should be unworthy of my rank if I did not show myself grateful to my teacher. Let it be yours to choose the manner."

There was a pause, during which the carriage continued to speed through the streets, and the two men were each buried in his own reflections. The silence was broken by Colonel Geraldine.

"Your Highness," said he, "has by this time a considerable body of prisoners. There is at least one criminal among the number to whom justice should be dealt. Our oath forbids us all recourse to law; and discretion would forbid it equally if the oath were loosened. May I inquire your Highness's intention?"

"It is decided," answered Florizel; "the President must fall in duel. It only remains to choose his adversary."

"Your Highness has permitted me to name my own recompense," said the Colonel. "Will he permit me to ask the appointment of my brother? It is an honourable post, but I dare assure your Highness that the lad will acquit himself with credit."

"You ask me an ungracious favour," said the Prince, "but I must refuse you nothing."

The Colonel kissed his hand with the greatest affection; and at that moment the carriage rolled under the archway of the Prince's splendid residence.

An hour after, Florizel in his official robes, and covered with all the orders of Bohemia, received the members of the Suicide Club.

"Foolish and wicked men," said he, "as many of you as have been driven into this strait by the lack of fortune shall receive employment and remuneration from my officers. Those who suffer under a sense of guilt must have recourse to a higher and more generous Potentate than I. I feel pity for you all, deeper than you can imagine; tomorrow you shall tell me your stories; and as you answer more frankly, I shall be the more able to remedy your misfortunes. As for you," he added, turning to the President, "I should only offend a person of your parts by any offer of assistance; but I have instead a piece of diversion to propose to you. Here," laying his hand on the shoulder of Colonel Geraldine's young brother, "is an officer of mine who desires to make a little tour upon the Continent; and I ask you, as a favour, to accompany him on this excursion. Do you," he went on, changing his tone, "do you shoot well with the pistol? Because you may have need of that accomplishment. When two men go travelling

together, it is best to be prepared for all. Let me add that, if by any chance you should lose young Mr. Geraldine upon the way, I shall always have another member of my household to place at your disposal; and I am known. Mr. President to have long eyesight. and as long an arm."

With these words, said with much sternness, the Prince concluded his address. Next morning the members of the club were suitably provided for by his munificence, and the President set forth upon his travels, under the supervision of Mr. Geraldine, and a pair of faithful and adroit lackeys, well trained in the Prince's household. Not content with this, discreet agents were put in possession of the house in Box Court, and all letters or visitors for the Suicide Club or its officials were to be examined by Prince Florizel in person.

Buried Treasure

BY STEWART EDWARD WHITE

I

The Old Timer

Just at dusk one afternoon we finished cutting the herd which our morning's drive had collected. The stray-herd, with its new additions from the day's work, we pushed rapidly into one big stock corral. The cows and unbranded calves we urged into another. Fifty head of beef steers found asylum from dust, heat, and racing to and fro, in the mile square wire enclosure called the pasture. All the remainder, for which we had no further use, we drove out of the flat into the brush and toward the distant mountains. Then we let them go as best pleased them.

By now the desert had turned slate-coloured, and the brush was olive green with evening. The hard, uncompromising ranges, twenty miles to eastward, had softened behind a wonderful veil of purple and pink, vivid as the chiffon of a girl's gown. To the south and southwest the Chiricahuas and Dragoons were lost in thunderclouds which flashed and rumbled.

We jogged homewards, our cutting ponies, tired with the quick, sharp work, shuffling knee deep in a dusk that seemed to disengage itself and rise upwards from the surface of the desert. Everybody was hungry and tired. At the chuck-wagon we threw off our saddles and turned the mounts into the remuda. Some of the wisest of us, remembering the thunder-clouds, stacked our gear under the veranda roof of the old ranch-house.

Supper was ready. We seized the tin battery, filled the plates with the meat, bread, and canned corn, and squatted on our heels. The food was good, and we ate hugely in silence. When we could hold no more we lit pipes. Then we had leisure to notice that the storm-

loud was mounting in a portentous silence to the zenith, quenching he brilliant desert stars.

"Rolls" were scattered everywhere. A roll includes a cowboy's bed nd all of his personal belongings. When the outfit includes a bed-vagon, the roll assumes bulky proportions.

As soon as we had come to a definite conclusion that it was going o rain, we deserted the camp-fire and went rustling for our blankets. At the end of ten minutes every bed was safe within the doors of the bandoned adobe ranch-house, each owner recumbent on the floor-laim he had pre-empted, and every man hoping fervently that he had uessed right as to the location of leaks.

Ordinarily we had depended on the light of camp-fires, so now rtificial illumination lacked. Each man was indicated by the alter-ately glowing and waning lozenge of his cigaret fire. Occasionally ome one struck a match, revealing for a moment high-lights on bronzed ountenances, and the silhouette of a shading hand. Voices spoke dis-mbodied. As the conversation developed, we gradually recognized he membership of our own roomful. I had forgotten to state that the anch-house included four chambers. Outside, the rain roared with rizona ferocity. Inside, men congratulated themselves, or swore as eaks developed and localized.

Naturally we talked first of stampedes. Cows and bears are the wo great cattle-country topics. Then we had a mouth-organ solo or wo, which naturally led on to songs. My turn came. I struck up he first verse of a sailor chantey as possessing at least the interest of ovelty:

> Oh, once we were a-sailing, a-sailing were we,
> *Blow high, blow low, what care we;*
> And we were a-sailing to see what we could see,
> *Down on the coast of the High Barbaree.*

I had just gone so far when I was brought up short by a tremendous ath behind me. At the same instant a match flared. I turned to ace a stranger holding the little light above his head, and peering with ery intentness over the group sprawled about the floor.

He was evidently just in from the storm. His dripping hat lay at his eet. A shock of straight, close-clipped vigorous hair stood up gray

above his seamed forehead. Bushy iron-gray eyebrows drawn close together thatched a pair of burning, unquenchable eyes. A square, deep jaw, lightly stubbled with gray, was clamped so tight that the cheek muscles above it stood out in knots and welts.

Then the match burned his thick, square fingers, and he dropped it into the darkness that ascended to swallow it.

"Who was singing that song?" he cried harshly. Nobody answered.

"Who was that singing?" he demanded again.

By this time I had recovered from my first astonishment.

"I was singing," said I.

Another match was instantly lit and thrust into my very face. I underwent the fierce scrutiny of an instant, then the taper was thrown away half consumed.

"Where did you learn it?" the stranger asked in an altered voice.

"I don't remember," I replied; "it is a common enough deep-sea chantey."

A heavy pause fell. Finally the stranger sighed.

"Quite like," he said; "I never heard but one man sing it."

"Who in hell are you?" someone demanded out of the darkness.

Before replying, the newcomer lit a third match, searching for a place to sit down. As he bent forward, his strong, harsh face once more came clearly into view.

"He's Colorado Rogers," the Cattleman answered for him; "I know him."

"Well," insisted the first voice, "what in hell does Colorado Rogers mean by bustin' in on our song *fiesta* that way?"

"Tell them, Rogers," advised the Cattleman, "tell them—just as you told it down on the Gila ten years ago next month."

"What?" inquired Rogers. "Who are you?"

"You don't know me," replied the Cattleman, "but I was with Buck Johnson's outfit then. Give us the yarn."

"Well," agreed Rogers, "pass over the 'makings' and I will."

He rolled and lit a cigaret, while I revelled in the memory of his rich, great voice. It was of the sort made to declaim against the sea or the rush of rivers or, as here, the fall of waters and the thunder—full, from the chest, with the caressing throat vibration that gives colour to the most ordinary statements. After ten words we sank back oblivious

of the storm, forgetful of the leaky roof and the dirty floor, lost in the story told us by the Old Timer.

II

The Texas Rangers

I came from Texas, like the bulk of you punchers, but a good while before the most of you were born. That was forty-odd years ago—and I've been on the Colorado River ever since. That's why they call me Colorado Rogers. About a dozen of us came out together. We had all been Texas Rangers, but when the war broke out we were out of a job. We none of us cared much for the Johnny Rebs, and still less for the Yanks, so we struck overland for the West, with the idea of hitting the California diggings.

Well, we got switched off one way and another. When we got down to about where Douglas is now, we found that the Mexican Government was offering a bounty for Apache scalps. That looked pretty good to us, for Injin chasing was our job, so we started in to collect. Did pretty well, too, for about three months, and then the Injins began to get too scarce, or too plenty in streaks. Looked like our job was over with, but some of the boys discovered that Mexicans, having straight black hair, you couldn't tell one of their scalps from an Apache's. After that the bounty business picked up for a while. It was too much for me, though, and I quit the outfit and pushed on alone until I struck the Colorado about where Yuma is now.

At that time the California immigrants by the southern route used to cross just there, and these Yuma Injins had a monopoly on the ferry business. They were a peaceful, fine-looking lot, without a thing on but a gee-string. The women had belts with rawhide strings hanging to the knees. They put them on one over the other until they didn't feel too decollotey. It wasn't until the soldiers came that the officers' wives got them to wear handkerchiefs over their breasts. The system was all right, though. They wallowed around in the hot, clean sand, like chickens, and kept healthy. Since they took to wearing clothes they've been petering out, and dying of dirt and assorted diseases.

They ran this ferry monopoly by means of boats made of tules, charged a scand'lous low price, and everything was happy and lovely.

I ran on a little bar and panned out some dust, so I camped a while, washing gold, getting friendly with the Yumas, and talking horse and other things with the immigrants.

About a month of this, and the Texas boys drifted in. Seems they sort of overdid the scalp matter, and got found out. When they saw me, they stopped and went into camp. They'd traveled a heap of desert, and were getting sick of it. For a while they tried gold washing, but I had the only pocket—and that was about skinned. One evening a fellow named Walleye announced that he had been doing some figuring, and wanted to make a speech. We told him to fire ahead.

"Now look here," said he, "what's the use of going to California? Why not stay here?"

"What in hell would we do here?" someone asked. "Collect Gila monsters for their good looks?"

"Don't get gay," said Walleye. "What's the matter with going into business? Here's a heap of people going through, and more coming every day. This ferry business could be made to pay big. Them Injins charges two bits a head. That's a crime for the only way across. And how much do you suppose whisky'd be worth to drink after that desert? And a man's so sick of himself by the time he gets this far that he'd play chuck-a-luck, let alone faro or monte."

That kind of talk hit them where they lived, and Yuma was founded right then and there. They hadn't any whisky yet, but cards were plenty, and the ferry monopoly was too easy. Walleye served notice on the Injins that a dollar a head went; and we all set to building a tule raft like the others. Then the wild bunch got uneasy, so they walked upstream one morning and stole the Injins' boats. The Injins came after them innocent as babies, thinking the raft had gone adrift. When they got into camp our men opened up and killed four of them as a kind of hint. After that the ferry company didn't have any trouble. The Yumas moved up river a ways, where they've lived ever since. They got the corpses and buried them. That is, they dug a trench for each one and laid poles across it, with a funeral pyre on the poles. Then they put the body on top, and the women of the family cut their hair off and threw it on. After that they set fire to the outfit, and, when the poles had burned through, the whole business fell into the trench of its own accord. It was the neatest, automatic, self-cocking,

double-action sort of a funeral I ever saw. There wasn't any ceremony —only crying.

The ferry business flourished at prices which were sometimes hard to collect. But it was a case of pay or go back, and it was a tur'ble long ways back. We got us timbers and made a scow; built a *baile* and saloon and houses out of adobe; and called her Yuma, after the Injins that had really started her. We got our supplies through the Gulf of California, where sailing boats worked up the river. People began to come in for one reason or another, and first thing we knew we had a store and all sorts of trimmings. In fact we was a real live town.

III

The Sailor with One Hand

At this moment the heavy beat of the storm on the roof ceased with miraculous suddenness, leaving the outside world empty of sound save for the *drip, drip, drip* of eaves. Nobody ventured to fill in the pause that followed the stranger's last words, so in a moment he continued his narrative.

We had every sort of people with us off and on, and, as I was lookout at a popular game, I saw them all. One evening I was on my way home about two o'clock of a moonlit night, when on the edge of the shadow I stumbled over a body lying part across the footway. At the same instant I heard the rip of steel through cloth and felt a sharp stab in my left leg. For a minute I thought some drunk had used his knife on me, and I mighty near derringered him as he lay. But somehow I didn't, and looking closer, I saw the man was unconscious. Then I scouted to see what had cut me, and found that the fellow had lost a hand. In place of it he wore a sharp steel hook. This I had tangled up with and gotten well pricked.

I dragged him out into the light. He was a slim-built young fellow, with straight black hair, long and lank and oily, a lean face, and big hooked nose. He had on only a thin shirt, a pair of rough wool pants, and the rawhide home-made *zapatos* the Mexicans wore then instead of boots. Across his forehead ran a long gash, cutting his left eyebrow square in two.

There was no doubt of his being alive, for he was breathing hard, like a man does when he gets hit over the head. It didn't sound good. When a man breathes that way he's mostly all gone.

Well, it was really none of my business, as you might say. Men got batted over the head often enough in those days. But for some reason I picked him up and carried him to my 'dobe shack, and laid him out and washed his cut with sour wine. That brought him to. Sour wine is fine to put a wound in shape to heal, but it's no soothing syrup. He sat up as though he'd been touched with a hot poker, stared around wild-eyed, and cut loose with that song you were singing. Only it wasn't that verse. It was another one further along, that went like this:

> Their coffin was their ship, and their grave it was the sea,
> *Blow high, blow low, what care we;*
> And the quarter that we gave them was to sink them in the sea,
> *Down on the coast of the High Barbaree.*

It fair made my hair rise to hear him, with the big, still, solemn desert outside, and the quiet moonlight, and the shadows, and him sitting up straight and gaunt, his eyes blazing each side his big eagle nose, and his snaky hair hanging over the raw cut across his head. However, I made out to get him bandaged up and in shape; and pretty soon he sort of went to sleep.

Well, he was clean out of his head for nigh two weeks. Most of the time he lay flat on his back staring at the pole roof, his eyes burning and looking like they saw each one something a different distance off, the way crazy eyes do. That was when he was best. Then again he'd sing that Barbaree song until I'd go out and look at the Colorado flowing by just to be sure I hadn't died and gone below. Or else he'd just talk. That was the worst performance of all. It was like listening to one end of a telephone, though we didn't know what telephones were in those days. He began when he was a kid, and he gave his side of conversations, pausing for replies. I could mighty near furnish the replies sometimes. It was a queer lingo—about ships and ships' officers and gales and calms and fights and pearls and whales and islands and birds and skies. But it was all little stuff. I used to listen by the hour, but I never made out anything really important as to who the man was, or where he'd come from, or what he'd done.

At the end of the second week I came in at noon as per usual to fix him up with grub. I didn't pay any attention to him, for he was quiet. As I was bending over the fire he spoke. Usually I didn't bother with his talk, for it didn't mean anything, but something in his voice made me turn. He was lying on his side, those black eyes of his blazing at me, but now both of them saw the same distance.

"Where are my clothes?" he asked, very intense.

"You ain't in any shape to want clothes," said I. "Lie still."

I hadn't any more than got the words out of my mouth before he was atop me. His method was a winner. He had me by the throat with his hand, and I felt the point of the hook pricking the back of my neck. One little squeeze—. Talk about your deadly weapons!

But he'd been too sick and too long abed. He turned dizzy and keeled over, and I dumped him back on the bunk. Then I put my six-shooter on.

In a minute or so he came to.

"Now, you're a nice, sweet proposition," said I, as soon as I was sure he could understand me. "Here I pick you up on the street and save your worthless carcass, and the first chance you get you try to crawl my hump. Explain."

"Where's my clothes?" he demanded again, very fierce.

"For heaven's sake," I yelled at him, "what's the matter with you and your old clothes? There ain't enough of them to dust a fiddle with anyway. What do you think I'd want with them? They're safe enough."

"Let me have them," he begged.

"Now, look here," said I, "you can't get up today. You ain't fit."

"I know," he pleaded, "but let me see them."

Just to satisfy him I passed over his old duds.

"I've been robbed," he cried.

"Well," said I, "what did you expect would happen to you lying around Yuma after midnight with a hole in your head?"

"Where's my coat?" he asked.

"You had no coat when I picked you up," I replied.

He looked at me mighty suspicious, but didn't say anything more—wouldn't even answer when I spoke to him. After he'd eaten a fair meal he fell asleep. When I came back that evening the bunk was empty and he was gone.

I didn't see him again for two days. Then I caught sight of him quite a ways off. He nodded at me very sour, and dodged around the corner of the store.

"Guess he suspicions I stole that old coat of his," thinks I; and afterwards I found that my surmise had been correct.

However, he didn't stay long in that frame of mind. It was along towards evening, and I was walking on the banks looking down over the muddy old Colorado, as I always liked to do. The sun had just set, and the mountains had turned hard and stiff, as they do after the glow, and the sky above them was a thousand million miles deep of pale green-gold light. A pair of Greasers were ahead of me, but I could see only their outlines, and they didn't seem to interfere any with the scenery. Suddenly a black figure seemed to rise up out of the ground; the Mexican man went down as though he'd been jerked with a string, and the woman screeched.

I ran up, pulling my gun. The Mex was flat on his face, his arms stretched out. On the middle of his back knelt my one-armed friend. And that sharp hook was caught neatly under the point of the Mexican's jaw. You bet he lay still.

I really think I was just in time to save the man's life. According to my belief another minute would have buried the hook in the Mexican's neck. Anyway, I thrust the muzzle of my Colt's into the sailor's face.

"What's this?" I asked.

The sailor looked up at me without changing his position. He was not the least bit afraid.

"This man has my coat," he explained.

"Where'd you get the coat?" I asked the Mex.

"I ween heem at monte off Antonio Curvez," said he.

"Maybe," growled the sailor.

He still held the hook under the man's jaw, but with the other hand he ran rapidly under and over the Mexican's left shoulder. In the half light I could see his face change. The gleam died from his eye; the snarl left his lips. Without further delay he arose to his feet.

"Get up and give it here," he demanded.

The Mexican was only too glad to get off so easy. I don't know whether he'd really won the coat at monte or not. In any case, he flew *poco pronto*, leaving me and my friend together.

The man with the hook felt the left shoulder of the coat again, looked up, met my eye, muttered something intended to be pleasant, and walked away.

This was in December.

During the next two months he was a good deal about town, mostly doing odd jobs. I saw him off and on. He always spoke to me as pleasantly as he knew how, and once made some sort of a bluff about paying me back for my trouble in bringing him around. However, I didn't pay much attention to that, being at the time almighty busy holding down my card games.

The last day of February I was sitting in my shack smoking a pipe after supper, when my one-armed friend opened the door a foot, slipped in, and shut it immediately. By the time he looked towards me I knew where my six-shooter was.

"That's all right," said I, "but you better stay right there."

I intended to take no more chances with that hook.

He stood there looking straight at me without winking or offering to move.

"What do you want?" I asked.

"I want to make up to you for your trouble," said he. "I've got a good thing, and I want to let you in on it."

"What kind of a good thing?" I asked.

"Treasure," said he.

"H'm," said I.

I examined him closely. He looked all right enough, neither drunk nor loco.

"Sit down," said I—"over there; the other side the table." He did so. "Now, fire away," said I.

He told me his name was Solomon Anderson, but that he was generally known as Handy Solomon, on account of his hook; that he had always followed the sea; that lately he had coasted the west shores of Mexico; that at Guaymas he had fallen in with Spanish friends, in company with whom he had visited the mines in the Sierra Madre; that on this expedition the party had been attacked by Yaquis and wiped out, he alone surviving; that his blanket-mate before expiring had told him of gold buried in a cove of Lower California by the man's grandfather; that the man had given him a chart showing the location of the treasure; that he had sewn this chart in the shoulder of his

coat, whence his suspicion of me and his being so loco about getting it back.

"And it's a big thing," said Handy Solomon to me, "for they's not only gold, but altar jewels and diamonds. It will make us rich, and a dozen like us, and you can kiss the Book on that."

"That may all be true," said I, "but why do you tell me? Why don't you get your treasure without the need of dividing it?"

"Why, mate," he answered, "it's just plain gratitude. Didn't you save my life, and nuss me, and take care of me when I was nigh killed?"

"Look here, Anderson, or Handy Solomon, or whatever you please to call yourself," I rejoined to this, "if you're going to do business with me—and I do not understand yet just what it is you want of me—you'll have to talk straight. It's all very well to say gratitude, but that don't go with me. You've been around here three months, and barring a half-dozen civil words and twice as many of the other kind, I've failed to see any indications of your gratitude before. It's a quality with a hell of a hang-fire to it."

He looked at me sideways, spat, and looked at me sideways again. Then he burst into a laugh.

"The devil's a preacher, if you ain't lost your pin-feathers," said he. "Well, it's this then: I got to have a boat to get there; and she must be stocked. And I got to have help with the treasure, if it's like this fellow said it was. And the Yaquis and cannibals from Tiburon is through the country. It's money I got to have, and it's money I haven't got, and can't get unless I let somebody in as pardner."

"Why me?" I asked.

"Why not?" he retorted. "I ain't see anybody I like better."

We talked the matter over at length. I had to force him to each point, for suspicion was strong in him. I stood out for a larger party. He strongly opposed this as depreciating the shares, but I had no intention of going alone into what was then considered a wild and dangerous country. Finally we compromised. A third of the treasure was to go to him, a third to me, and the rest was to be divided among the men whom I should select. This scheme did not appeal to him.

"How do I know you plays fair?" he complained. "They'll be four of you to one of me; and I don't like it, and you can kiss the Book on that."

"If you don't like it, leave it," said I, "and get out, and be damned to you."

Finally he agreed; but he refused me a look at the chart, saying that he had left it in a safe place. I believe in reality he wanted to be surer of me, and for that I can hardly blame him.

IV

The Murder on the Beach

At this moment the cook stuck his head in at the open door.

"Say, you fellows," he complained, "I got to be up at three o'clock. Ain't you *never* goin' to turn in?"

"Shut up, Doctor!" "Somebody kill him!" "Here, sit down and listen to this yarn!" yelled a savage chorus.

There ensued a slight scuffle, a few objections. Then silence, and the stranger took up his story.

I had a chum named Billy Simpson, and I rung him in for friendship. Then there was a solemn, tall Texas young fellow, strong as a bull, straight and tough, brought up fighting Injins. He never said much, but I knew he'd be right there when the gong struck. For fourth man I picked out a German named Schwartz. He and Simpson had just come back from the mines together. I took him because he was a friend of Billy's, and besides was young and strong, and was the only man in town excepting the sailor, Anderson, who knew anything about running a boat. I forgot to say that the Texas fellow was named Denton.

Handy Solomon had his boat all picked out. It belonged to some Basques who had sailed her around from California. I must say when I saw her I felt inclined to renig, for she wasn't more'n about twenty-five feet long, was open except for a little sort of cubby-hole up in the front of her, had one mast, and was pointed at both ends. However, Schwartz said she was all right. He claimed he knew the kind; that she was the sort used by French fishermen, and could stand all sorts of trouble. She didn't look it.

We worked her up to Yuma, partly with oars and partly by sails. Then we loaded her with grub for a month. Each of us had his own weapons, of course. In addition we put in picks and shovels, and a

small cask of water. Handy Solomon said that would be enough, as there was water marked down on his chart. We told the gang that we were going trading.

At the end of the week we started, and were out four days. There wasn't much room, what with the supplies and the baggage, for the five of us. We had to curl up 'most anywheres to sleep. And it certainly seemed to me that we were in lots of danger. The waves were much bigger than she was, and splashed on us considerable, but Schwartz and Anderson didn't seem to mind. They laughed at us. Anderson sang that song of his, and Schwartz told us of the placers he had worked. He and Simpson had made a pretty good clean-up, just enough to make them want to get rich. The first day out Simpson showed us a belt with about a hundred ounces of dust. This he got tired of wearing, so he kept it in a compass-box, which was empty.

At the end of the four days we turned in at a deep bay and came to anchor. The country was the usual proposition—very light-brown, brittle-looking mountains, about two thousand feet high; lots of sage and cactus, a pebbly beach, and not a sign of anything fresh and green.

But Denton and I were mighty glad to see any sort of land. Besides, our keg of water was pretty low, and it was getting about time to discover the spring the chart spoke of. So we piled our camp stuff in the small boat and rowed ashore.

Anderson led the way confidently enough up a dry arroyo, whose sides were clay and conglomerate. But, though we followed it to the end, we could find no indications that it was anything more than a wash for rain floods.

"That's main queer," muttered Anderson, and returned to the beach.

There he spread out the chart—the first look at it we'd had—and set to studying it.

It was a careful piece of work done in India ink, pretty old, to judge by the look of it, and with all sorts of pictures of mountains and dolphins and ships and anchors around the edge. There was our bay, all right. Two crosses were marked on the land part—one labelled *"oro"* and the other *"agua."*

"Now there's the high cliff," says Anderson, following it out, "and there's the round hill with the boulder—and if them bearings don't point due for that ravine, the devil's a preacher."

We tried it again, with the same result. A second inspection of the

map brought us no light on the question. We talked it over, and looked at it from all points, but we couldn't dodge the truth: the chart was wrong.

Then we explored several of the nearest gullies, but without finding anything but loose stones baked hot in the sun.

By now it was getting towards sundown, so we built us a fire of mesquite on the beach, made us supper, and boiled a pot of beans.

We talked it over. The water was about gone.

"That's what we've got to find first," said Simpson, "no question of it. It's God knows how far to the next water, and we don't know how long it will take us to get there in that little boat. If we run our water entirely out before we start, we're going to be in trouble. We'll have a good look tomorrow, and if we don't find her, we'll run down to Mollyhay [1] and get a few extra casks."

"Perhaps that map is wrong about the treasure, too," suggested Denton.

"I thought of that," said Handy Solomon, "but then, thinks I to myself, this old rip probably don't make no long stay here—just dodges in and out like, between tides, to bury his loot. He would need no water at the time; but he might when he came back, so he marked the water on his map. But he wasn't noways particular *and* exact, being in a hurry. But you can kiss the Book to it that he didn't make no such mistakes about the swag."

"I believe you're right," said I.

When we came to turn in, Anderson suggested that he should sleep aboard the boat. But Billy Simpson, in mind perhaps of the hundred ounces in the compass-box, insisted that he'd just as soon as not. After a little objection Handy Solomon gave in, but I thought he seemed sour about it. We built a good fire, and in about ten seconds were asleep.

Now, usually I sleep like a log, and did this time until about midnight. Then all at once I came broad awake and sitting up in my blankets. Nothing had happened—I wasn't even dreaming—but there I was as alert and clear as though it were broad noon.

By the light of the fire I saw Handy Solomon sitting, and at his side our five rifles gathered.

[1] Mulege—I retain the Old Timer's pronunciation.

I must have made some noise, for he turned quietly towards me, saw I was awake, and nodded. The moonlight was sparkling on the hard stony landscape, and a thin dampness came out from the sea.

After a minute Anderson threw on another stick of wood, yawned, and stood up.

"It's wet," said he; "I've been fixing the guns."

He showed me how he was inserting a little patch of felt between the hammer and the nipple—a scheme of his own for keeping damp from the powder. Then he rolled up in his blanket. At the time it all seemed quite natural—I suppose my mind wasn't fully awake, for all my head felt so clear. Afterwards I realized what a ridiculous bluff he was making: for of course the cap already on the nipple was plenty to keep out the damp. I fully believe he intended to kill us as we lay. Only my sudden awakening spoiled his plan.

I had absolutely no idea of this at the time, however. Not the slightest suspicion entered my head. In view of that fact, I have since believed in guardian angels. For my next move, which at the time seemed to me absolutely aimless, was to change my blankets from one side of the fire to the other. And that brought me alongside the five rifles.

Owing to this fact, I am now convinced, we awoke safe at daylight, cooked breakfast, and laid the plan for the day. Anderson directed us. I was to climb over the ridge before us and search in the ravine on the other side. Schwartz was to explore up the beach to the left, and Denton to the right. Anderson said he would wait for Billy Simpson, who had overslept in the darkness of the cubby-hole, and who was now paddling ashore. The two of them would push inland to the west until a high hill would give them a chance to look around for greenery.

We started at once, before the sun would be hot. The hill I had to climb was steep and covered with *chollas,* so I didn't get along very fast. When I was about half-way to the top I heard a shot from the beach. I looked back. Anderson was in the small boat, rowing rapidly out to the vessel. Denton was running up the beach from one direction and Schwartz from the other. I slid and slipped down the bluff, getting pretty well stuck up with the *cholla* spines.

At the beach we found Billy Simpson lying on his face, shot through the back. We turned him over, but he was apparently dead. Ander-

son had hoisted the sail, had cut loose from the anchor, and was sailing away.

Denton stood up straight and tall, looking. Then he pulled his belt in a hole, grabbed my arm, and started to run up the long curve of the beach. Behind us came Schwartz. We ran near a mile, and then fell among some tules in an inlet at the farther point.

"What is it?" I gasped.

"Our only chance—to get him—" said Denton. "He's got to go around this point—big wind—perhaps his mast will bust—then he'll come ashore—" He opened and shut his big brown hands.

So there we two fools lay, like panthers in the tules, taking our only one-in-a-million chance to lay hands on Anderson. Any sailor could have told us that the mast wouldn't break, but we had winded Schwartz a quarter of a mile back. And so we waited, our eyes fixed on the boat's sail, grudging her every inch, just burning to fix things to suit us a little better. And naturally she made the point in what I now know was only a fresh breeze, squared away, and dropped down before the wind toward Guaymas.

We walked back slowly to our camp, swallowing the copper taste of too hard a run. Schwartz we picked up from a boulder, just recovering. We were all of us crazy mad. Schwartz half wept, and blamed and cussed. Denton glowered away in silence. I ground my feet into the sand in a helpless sort of anger, not only at the man himself, but also at the whole way things had turned out. I don't believe the least notion of our predicament had come to any of us. All we knew yet was that we had been done up, and we were hostile about it.

But at camp we found something to occupy us for the moment. Poor Billy was not dead, as we had supposed, but very weak and sick, and a hole square through him. When we returned he was conscious, but that was about all. His eyes were shut, and he was moaning. I tore open his shirt to stanch the blood. He felt my hand and opened his eyes. They were glazed, and I don't think he saw me.

"Water, water!" he cried.

At that we others saw all at once where we stood. I remember I rose to my feet and found myself staring straight into Tom Denton's eyes. We looked at each other that way for I guess it was a full minute. Then Tom shook his head.

"Water, water!" begged poor Billy.

Tom leaned over him.

"My God, Billy, there ain't any water!" said he.

V

Buried Treasure

The Old Timer's voice broke a little. We had leisure to notice that even the drip from the eaves had ceased. A faint, diffused light vouchsafed us dim outlines of sprawling figures and tumbled bedding. Far in the distance outside a wolf yelped.

We could do nothing for him except shelter him from the sun, and wet his forehead with sea-water; nor could we think clearly for ourselves as long as the spark of life lingered in him. His chest rose and fell regularly, but with long pauses between. When the sun was overhead he suddenly opened his eyes.

"Fellows," said he, "it's beautiful over there; the grass is so green, and the water so cool; I am tired of marching, and I reckon I'll cross over and camp."

Then he died. We scooped out a shallow hole above tide-mark, and laid him in it, and piled over him stones from the wash.

Then we went back to the beach, very solemn, to talk it over.

"Now, boys," said I, "there seems to me just one thing to do, and that is to pike out for water as fast as we can."

"Where?" asked Denton.

"Well," I argued, "I don't believe there's any water about this bay. Maybe there was when that chart was made. It was a long time ago. And anyway, the old pirate was a sailor, and no plainsman, and maybe he mistook rainwater for a spring. We've looked around this end of the bay. The chances are we'd use up two or three days exploring around the other, and then wouldn't be as well off as we are right now."

"Which way?" asked Denton again, mighty brief.

"Well," said I, "there's one thing I've always noticed in case of folks held up by the desert: they generally go wandering about here and there looking for water until they die not far from where they got lost. And usually they've covered a heap of actual distance."

"That's so," agreed Denton.

"Now, I've always figured that it would be a good deal better to start right out for some particular place, even if it's ten thousand miles away. A man is just as likely to strike water going in a straight line as he is going in a circle; and then, besides, he's getting somewhere."

"Correct," said Denton.

"So," I finished, "I reckon we'd better follow the coast south and try to get to Mollyhay."

"How far is that?" asked Schwartz.

"I don't rightly know. But somewheres between three and five hundred miles, at a guess."

At that he fell to glowering and glooming with himself, brooding over what a hard time it was going to be. That is the way with a German. First off he's plumb scared at the prospect of suffering anything, and would rather die right off than take long chances. After he gets into the swing of it, he behaves as well as any man.

We took stock of what we had to depend on. The total assets proved to be just three pairs of legs. A pot of coffee had been on the fire, but that villain had kicked it over when he left. The kettle of beans was there, but somehow we got the notion they might have been poisoned, so we left them. I don't know now why we were so foolish—if poison was his game, he'd have tried it before—but at that time it seemed reasonable enough. Perhaps the horror of the morning's work, and the sight of the brittle-brown mountains, and the ghastly yellow glare of the sun, and the blue waves racing by outside, and the big strong wind that blew through us so hard that it seemed to blow empty our souls, had turned our judgment. Anyway, we left a full meal there in the bean-pot.

So without any further delay we set off up the ridge I had started to cross that morning. Schwartz lagged, sulky as a muley cow, but we managed to keep him with us. At the top of the ridge we took our bearings for the next deep bay. Already we had made up our minds to stick to the sea-coast, both on account of the lower country over which to travel and the off chance of falling in with a fishing vessel. Schwartz muttered something about its being too far even to the next bay, and wanted to sit down on a rock. Denton didn't say anything, but he jerked Schwartz up by the collar so fiercely that the German gave it over and came along.

We dropped down into the gully, stumbled over the boulder wash,

and began to toil in the ankle-deep sand of a little sage-brush flat this side of the next ascent. Schwartz followed steadily enough now, but had fallen forty or fifty feet behind. This was a nuisance, as we had to keep turning to see if he still kept up. Suddenly he seemed to disappear.

Denton and I hurried back to find him on his hands and knees behind a sage-brush, clawing away at the sand like mad.

"Can't be water on this flat," said Denton; "he must have gone crazy."

"What's the matter, Schwartz?" I asked.

For answer he moved a little to one side, showing beneath his knee one corner of a wooden box sticking above the sand.

At this we dropped beside him, and in five minutes had uncovered the whole of the chest. It was not very large, and was locked. A rock from the wash fixed that, however. We threw back the lid.

It was full to the brim of gold coins, thrown in loose, nigh two bushels of them.

"The treasure!" I cried.

There it was, sure enough, or some of it. We looked the chest through, but found nothing but the gold coins. The altar ornaments and jewels were lacking.

"Probably buried in another box or so," said Denton.

Schwartz wanted to dig around a little.

"No good," said I. "We've got our work cut out for us as it is."

Denton backed me up. We were both old hands at the business, had each in our time suffered the "cotton-mouth" thirst, and the memory of it outweighed any desire for treasure.

But Schwartz was money-mad. Left to himself he would have stayed on that sand flat to perish, as certainly as had poor Billy. We had fairly to force him away, and then succeeded only because we let him fill all his pockets to bulging with the coins. As we moved up the next rise, he kept looking back and uttering little moans against the crime of leaving it.

Luckily for us it was winter. We shouldn't have lasted six hours at this time of year. As it was, the sun was hot against the shale and the little stones of those cussed hills. We plodded along until late afternoon, toiling up one hill and down another, only to repeat immediately. Towards sundown we made the second bay, where we plunged into the

sea, clothes and all, and were greatly refreshed. I suppose a man absorbs a good deal that way. Anyhow, it always seemed to help.

We were now pretty hungry, and, as we walked along the shore, we began to look for turtles or shell-fish, or anything else that might come handy. There was nothing. Schwartz wanted to stop for a night's rest, but Denton and I knew better than that.

"Look here, Schwartz," said Denton, "you don't realize you're entered against time in this race—and that you're a damn fool to carry all that weight in your clothes."

So we dragged along all night.

It was weird enough, I can tell you. The moon shone cold and white over that dead, dry country. Hot whiffs rose from the baked stones and hillsides. Shadows lay under the stones like animals crouching. When we came to the edge of a silvery hill we dropped off into pitchy blackness. There we stumbled over boulders for a minute or so, and began to climb the steep shale on the other side. This was fearful work. The top seemed always miles away. By morning we didn't seem to have made much of anywhere. The same old hollow-looking mountains with the sharp edges stuck up in about the same old places.

We had got over being very hungry, and, though we were pretty dry, we didn't really suffer yet from thirst. About this time Denton ran across some fishhook cactus, which we cut up and chewed. They have a sticky wet sort of inside, which doesn't quench your thirst any, but helps to keep you from drying up and blowing away.

All that day we plugged along as per usual. It was main hard work, and we got to that state where things are disagreeable, but mechanical. Strange to say, Schwartz kept in the lead. It seemed to me at the time that he was using more energy than the occasion called for—just as a man runs faster before he comes to the giving-out point. However, the hours went by, and he didn't seem to get any more tired than the rest of us.

We kept a sharp lookout for anything to eat, but there was nothing but lizards and horned toads. Later we'd have been glad of them, but by that time we'd got out of their district. Night came. Just at sundown we took another wallow in the surf, and chewed some more fishhook cactus. When the moon came up we went on.

I'm not going to tell you how dead beat we got. We were pretty tough and strong, for all of us had been used to hard living, but after

the third day without anything to eat and no water to drink, it came to be pretty hard going. It got to the point where we had to have some *reason* for getting out besides just keeping alive. A man would sometimes rather die than keep alive, anyway, if it came only to that. But I made up my mind I was going to get out so I could smash up that Anderson, and I reckon Denton had the same idea. Schwartz didn't say anything, but he pumped on ahead of us, his back bent over and his clothes sagging and bulging with the gold he carried.

We used to travel all night, because it was cool and rest an hour or two at noon. That is all the rest we did get. I don't know how fast we went; I'd got beyond that. We must have crawled along mighty slow, though, after our first strength gave out. The way I used to do was to collect myself with an effort, look around for my bearings, pick out a landmark a little distance off, and forget everything but it. Then I'd plod along, knowing nothing but the sand and shale and slope under my feet, until I'd reached that landmark. Then I'd clear my mind and pick out another.

But I couldn't shut out the figure of Schwartz that way. He used to walk along just ahead of my shoulder. His face was all twisted up, but I remember thinking at the time it looked more as if he was worried in his mind than like bodily suffering. The weight of the gold in his clothes bent his shoulders over.

As we went on the country gradually got to be more mountainous, and, as we were steadily growing weaker, it did seem things were piling up on us. The eighth day we ran out of the fishhook cactus, and, being on a high promontory, were out of touch with the sea. For the first time my tongue began to swell a little. The cactus had kept me from that before. Denton must have been in the same fix, for he looked at me and raised one eyebrow kind of humorous.

Schwartz was having a good deal of difficulty to navigate. I will say for him that he had done well, but now I could see that his strength was going on him in spite of himself. He knew it, all right, for when we rested that day he took all the gold coins and spread them in a row, and counted them, and put them back in his pocket, and then all of a sudden snatched out two handfuls and threw them as far as he could.

"Too heavy," he muttered, but that was all he could bring himself to throw away.

All that night we wandered high in the air. I guess we tried to keep

a general direction, but I don't know. Anyway, along late, but before moonrise—she was now on the wane—I came to, and found myself looking over the edge of a twenty-foot drop. Right below me I made out a faint glimmer of white earth in the starlight. Somehow it reminded me of a little trail I used to know under a big rock back in Texas.

"Here's a trail," I thought, more than half loco; "I'll follow it!"

At least that's what half of me thought. The other half was sensible, and knew better, but it seemed to be kind of standing to one side, a little scornful, watching the performance. So I slid and slipped down to the strip of white earth, and, sure enough, it was a trail. At that the loco half of me gave the sensible part the laugh. I followed the path twenty feet and came to a dark hollow under the rock, and in it a round pool of water about a foot across. They say a man kills himself drinking too much, after starving for water. That may be, but it didn't kill me, and I sucked up all I could hold. Perhaps the fishhook cactus had helped. Well, sir, it was surprising how that drink brought me around. A minute before I'd been on the edge of going plumb loco, and here I was as clear-headed as a lawyer.

I hunted up Denton and Schwartz. They drank themselves full, too. Then we rested. It was mighty hard to leave that spring—

Oh, we had to do it. We'd have starved sure, there. The trail was a game trail, but that did us no good, for we had no weapons. How we did wish for the coffee-pot, so we could take some away. We filled our hats, and carried them about three hours, before the water began to soak through. Then we had to drink it in order to save it.

The country fairly stood up on end. We had to climb separate little hills so as to avoid rolling rocks down on each other. It took it out of us. About this time we began to see mountain sheep. They would come right up to the edges of the small cliffs to look at us. We threw stones at them, hoping to hit one in the forehead, but of course without any results.

The good effects of the water lasted us about a day. Then we began to see things again. Off and on I could see water plain as could be in every hollow, and game of all kinds standing around and looking at me. I knew these were all fakes. By making an effort I could swing things around to where they belonged. I used to do that every once in a while, just to be sure we weren't doubling back, and to look out for

real water. But most of the time it didn't seem to be worth while. I just let all these visions riot around and have a good time inside me or outside me, whichever it was. I knew I could get rid of them any minute. Most of the time, if I was in any doubt, it was easier to throw a stone to see if the animals were real or not. The real ones ran away.

We began to see bands of wild horses in the uplands. One day both Denton and I plainly saw one with saddle marks on him. If only one of us had seen him, it wouldn't have counted much, but we both made him out. This encouraged us wonderfully, though I don't see why it should have. We had topped the high country, too, and had started down the other side of the mountains that ran out on the promontory. Denton and I were still navigating without any thought of giving up, but Schwartz was getting in bad shape. I'd hate to pack twenty pounds over that country even with rest, food, and water. He was toting it on nothing. We told him so, and he came to see it, but he never could persuade himself to get rid of the gold all at once. Instead he threw away the pieces one by one. Each sacrifice seemed to nerve him up for another heat. I can shut my eyes and see it now—the wide, glaring, yellow country, the pasteboard mountains, we three dragging along, and the fierce sunshine flashing from the doubloons as one by one they went spinning through the air.

VI

The Chewed Sugar Cane

"I'd like to have trailed you fellows," sighed a voice from the corner.

"Would you!" said Colorado Rogers grimly.

It was five days to the next water. But they were worse than the eight days before. We were lucky, however, for at the spring we discovered in a deep wash near the coast, was the dried-up skull of a horse. It had been there a long time, but a few shreds of dried flesh still clung to it. It was the only thing that could be described as food that had passed our lips since breakfast thirteen days before. In that time we had crossed the mountain chain, and had come again to the sea. The Lord was good to us. He sent us the water, and the horse's

skull, and the smooth hard beach, without breaks or the necessity of climbing hills. And we needed it, oh, I promise you, we needed it!

I doubt if any of us could have kept the direction except by such an obvious and continuous landmark as the sea to our left. It hardly seemed worth while to focus my mind, but I did it occasionally just by way of testing myself. Schwartz still threw away his gold coins, and once, in one of my rare intervals of looking about me, I saw Denton picking them up. This surprised me mildly, but I was too tired to be very curious. Only now, when I saw Schwartz's arm sweep out in what had become a mechanical movement, I always took pains to look, and always I saw Denton search for the coin. Sometimes he found it, and sometimes he did not.

The figures of my companions and the yellow-brown tide sand under my feet, and a consciousness of the blue and white sea to my left, are all I remember, except when we had to pull ourselves together for the purpose of cutting fishhook cactus. I kept going, and I knew I had a good reason for doing so, but it seemed too much of an effort to recall what that reason was.

Schwartz threw away a gold piece as another man would take a stimulant. Gradually, without really thinking about it, I came to see this, and then went on to sabe why Denton picked up the coins; and a great admiration for Denton's cleverness seeped through me like water through the sand. He was saving the coins to keep Schwartz going. When the last coin went, Schwartz would give out. It all sounds queer now, but it seemed all right then—and it *was* all right, too.

So we walked on the beach, losing entire track of time. And after a long interval I came to myself to see Schwartz lying on the sand, and Denton standing over him. Of course we'd all been falling down a lot, but always before we'd got up again.

"He's give out," croaked Denton.

His voice sounded as if it was miles away, which surprised me, but, when I answered, mine sounded miles away, too, which surprised me still more.

Denton pulled out a handful of gold coins.

"This will buy him some more walk," said he gravely, "but not much."

I nodded. It seemed all right, this new, strange purchasing power of gold—it *was* all right, by God, and as real as buying bricks—

"I'll go on," said Denton, "and send back help. You come after."

"To Mollyhay," said I.

This far I reckon we'd hung onto ourselves because it was serious. Now I began to laugh. So did Denton. We laughed and laughed.

"A damn long way
To Mollyhay,"

said I. Then we laughed some more, until the tears ran down our cheeks, and we had to hold our poor weak sides. Pretty soon we fetched up with a gasp.

"A damn long way
To Mollyhay,"

whispered Denton, and then off we went into more shrieks. And when we would sober down a little, one or the other of us would say it again;

"A damn long way
To Mollyhay,"

and then we'd laugh some more. It must have been a sweet sight!

At last I realized that we ought to pull ourselves together, so I snubbed up short, and Denton did the same, and we set to laying plans. But every minute or so one of us would catch on some word, and then we'd trail off into rhymes and laughter and repetition.

"Keep him going as long as you can," said Denton.

"Yes."

"And be sure to stick to the beach."

That far it was all right and clear-headed. But the word "beach" let us out.

I'm a peach
Upon the beach,"

sings I, and there we were both off again until one or the other managed to grope his way back to common sense again. And sometimes we crow-hopped solemnly around and around the prostrate Schwartz like a pair of Injins.

But somehow we got our plan laid at last, and slipped the coins into Schwartz's pocket, and said good-by.

"Old socks, good-by,
You bet I'll try,"

yelled Denton, and laughing fit to kill, danced off up the beach, and out into a sort of gray mist that shut off everything beyond a certain distance from me now.

So I kicked Schwartz, he felt in his pocket, threw a gold piece away, and "bought a little more walk."

My entire vision was fifty feet or so across. Beyond that was gray mist. Inside my circle I could see the sand quite plainly and Denton's footprints. If I moved a little to the left, the wash of the waters would lap under the edge of that gray curtain. If I moved to the right, I came to cliffs. The nearer I drew to them, the farther up I could see, but I could never see to the top. It used to amuse me to move this area of consciousness about to see what I could find. Actual physical suffering was beginning to dull, and my head seemed to be getting clearer.

One day, without any apparent reason, I moved at right angles across the beach. Directly before me lay a piece of sugar cane, and one end of it had been chewed.

Do you know what that meant? Animals don't cut sugar cane and bring it to the beach and chew one end. A new strength ran through me, and actually the gray mist thinned and lifted for a moment, until I could make out dimly the line of cliffs and the tumbling sea.

I was not a bit hungry, but I chewed on the sugar cane, and made Schwartz do the same. When we went on I kept close to the cliff, even though the walking was somewhat heavier.

I remember after that its getting dark and then light again, so the night must have passed, but whether we rested or walked I do not know. Probably we did not get very far, though certainly we staggered ahead after sun-up, for I remember my shadow.

About midday, I suppose, I made out a dim trail leading up a break in the cliffs. Plenty of such trails we had seen before. They were generally made by peccaries in search of cast-up fish—I hope they had better luck than we.

But in the middle of this, as though for a sign, lay another piece of chewed sugar cane.

VII

The Calabash Stew

I had agreed with Denton to stick to the beach, but Schwartz could not last much longer, and I had not the slightest idea how far it might prove to be to Mollyhay. So I turned up the trail.

We climbed a mountain ten thousand feet high. I mean that; and I know, for I've climbed them that high, and I know just how it feels, and how many times you have to rest, and how long it takes, and how much it knocks out of you. Those are the things that count in measuring height, and so I tell you we climbed that far. Actually I suppose the hill was a couple of hundred feet, if not less. But on account of the gray mist I mentioned, I could not see the top, and the illusion was complete.

We reached the summit late in the afternoon, for the sun was square in our eyes. But instead of blinding me, it seemed to clear my sight, so that I saw below me a little mud hut with smoke rising behind it, and a small patch of cultivated ground.

I'll pass over how I felt about it: they haven't made the words—

Well, we stumbled down the trail and into the hut. At first I thought it was empty, but after a minute I saw a very old man crouched in a corner. As I looked at him he raised his bleared eyes to me, his head swinging slowly from side to side as though with a kind of palsy. He could not see me, that was evident, nor hear me, but some instinct not yet decayed turned him toward a new presence in the room. In my wild desire for water I found room to think that here was a man even worse off than myself.

A vessel of water was in the corner. I drank it. It was more than I could hold, but I drank even after I was filled, and the waste ran from the corners of my mouth. I had forgotten Schwartz. The excess made me a little sick, but I held down what I had swallowed, and I really believe it soaked into my system as it does into the desert earth after a drought.

In a moment or so I took the vessel and filled it and gave it to Schwartz. Then it seemed to me that my responsibility had ended. A

sudden great dreamy lassitude came over me. I knew I needed food, but I had no wish for it, and no ambition to search it out. The man in the corner mumbled at me with his toothless gums. I remember wondering if we were all to starve there peacefully together—Schwartz and his remaining gold coins, the man far gone in years, and myself. I did not greatly care.

After a while the light was blotted out. There followed a slight pause. Then I knew that someone had flown to my side, and was kneeling beside me and saying liquid, pitying things in Mexican. I swallowed something hot and strong. In a moment I came back from wherever I was drifting, to look up at a Mexican girl about twenty years old.

She was no great matter in looks, but she seemed like an angel to me then. And she had sense. No questions, no nothing. Just business. The only thing she asked of me was if I understood Spanish.

Then she told me that her brother would be back soon, that they were very poor, that she was sorry she had no meat to offer me, that they were *very* poor, that all they had was *calabash*—a sort of squash. All this time she was hustling things together. Next thing I knew I had a big bowl of calabash stew between my knees.

Now, strangely enough, I had no great interest in that calabash stew. I tasted it, sat and thought awhile, and tasted it again. By and by I had emptied the bowl. It was getting dark. I was very sleepy. A man came in, but I was too drowsy to pay any attention to him. I heard the sound of voices. Then I was picked up bodily and carried to an out-building and laid on a pile of skins. I felt the weight of a blanket thrown over me—

I awoke in the night. Mind you, I had practically had no rest at all for a matter of more than two weeks, yet I woke in a few hours. And, remember, even in eating the calabash stew I had felt no hunger in spite of my long fast. But now I found myself ravenous. You boys do not know what hunger is. It *hurts*. And all the rest of that night I lay awake chewing on the rawhide of a pack-saddle that hung near me.

Next morning the young Mexican and his sister came to us early, bringing more calabash stew. I fell on it like a wild animal, and just wallowed in it, so eager was I to eat. They stood and watched me—and, I suppose Schwartz, too, though I had now lost interest in anyone but myself—glancing at each other in pity from time to time.

When I had finished the man told me that they had decided to kill a beef so we could have meat. They were very poor, but God had brought us to them—

I appreciated this afterward. At the time I merely caught at the word "meat." It seemed to me I could have eaten the animal entire, hide, hoofs, and tallow. As a matter of fact, it was mighty lucky they didn't have any meat. If they had, we'd probably have killed ourselves with it. I suppose the calabash was about the best thing for us under the circumstances.

The Mexican went out to hunt up his horse. I called the girl back.

"How far is it to Mollyhay?" I asked her.

"A league," said she.

So we had been near our journey's end after all, and Denton was probably all right.

The Mexican went away horseback. The girl fed us calabash. We waited.

About one o'clock a group of horsemen rode over the hill. When they came near enough I recognized Denton at their head. That man was of tempered steel—

They had followed back along the beach, caught our trail where we had turned off, and so discovered us. Denton had fortunately found kind and intelligent people.

We said good-by to the Mexican girl. I made Schwartz give her one of his gold pieces.

But Denton could not wait for us to say "hullo" even, he was so anxious to get back to town, so we mounted the horses he had brought us, and rode off, very wobbly.

We lived three weeks in Mollyhay. It took us that long to get fed up. The lady I stayed with made a dish of kid meat and stuffed olives—

Why, an hour after filling myself up to the muzzle I'd be hungry again, and scouting round to houses looking for more to eat!

We talked things over a good deal, after we had gained a little strength. I wanted to take a little flyer at Guaymas to see if I could run across this Handy Solomon person, but Denton pointed out that Anderson would be expecting just that, and would take mighty good care to be scarce. His idea was that we'd do better to get hold of a boat and some water casks, and lug off the treasure we had stumbled

over. Denton told us that the idea of going back and scooping all that dinero up with a shovel had kept him going, just as the idea of getting even with Anderson had kept me going. Schwartz said that after he'd carried that heavy gold over the first day, he made up his mind he'd get the spending of it or bust. That's why he hated so to throw it away.

There were lots of fishing boats in the harbour, and we hired one, and a man to run it for next to nothing a week. We laid a course north, and in six days anchored in our bay.

I tell you it looked queer. There were the charred sticks of the fire, and the coffee-pot lying on its side. We took off our hats at poor Billy's grave a minute, and then climbed over the *cholla*-covered hill carrying our picks and shovels, and the canvas sacks to take the treasure away in.

There was no trouble in reaching the sandy flat. But when we got there we found it torn up from one end to the other. A few scattered timbers and three empty chests with the covers pried off alone remained. Handy Solomon had been there before us.

We went back to our boat sick at heart. Nobody said a word. We went aboard and made our Greaser boatman head for Yuma. It took us a week to get there. We were all of us glum, but Denton was the worst of the lot. Even after we'd got back to town and fallen into our old ways of life, he couldn't seem to get over it. He seemed plumb possessed of gloom, and moped around like a chicken with the pip. This surprised me, for I didn't think the loss of money would hit him so hard. It didn't hit any of us very hard in those days.

One evening I took him aside and fed him a drink and expostulated with him.

"Oh, *hell*, Rogers," he burst out, "I don't care about the loot. But, suffering cats, think how that fellow sized us up for a lot of pattern-made fools; and how right he was about it. Why, all he did was to sail out of sight around the next corner. He knew we'd start across country; and we did. All we had to do was to lay low, and save our legs. He was *bound* to come back. And we might have nailed him when he landed."

"That's about all there was to it," concluded Colorado Rogers, after a pause, "—except that I've been looking for him ever since,

and when I heard you singing that song I naturally thought I'd landed."

"And you never saw him again?" asked Windy Bill.

"Well," chuckled Rogers, "I did about ten year later. It was in Tucson. I was in the back of a store, when the door in front opened and this man came in. He stopped at the little cigar-case by the door. In about one jump I was on his neck. I jerked him over backwards before he knew what had struck him, threw him on his face, got my hands in his back-hair, and began to jump his features against the floor. Then all at once I noted that this man had two arms; so of course he was the wrong fellow. 'Oh, excuse me,' said I, and ran out the back door."

The Secret Sharer

BY JOSEPH CONRAD

(*1857-1924*)

I

On my right hand there were lines of fishing-stakes resembling a mysterious system of half-submerged bamboo fences, incomprehensible in its division of the domain of tropical fishes, and crazy of aspect as if abandoned for ever by some nomad tribe of fishermen now gone to the other end of the ocean; for there was no sign of human habitation as far as the eye could reach. To the left a group of barren islets, suggesting ruins of stone walls, towers, and blockhouses, had its foundations set in a blue sea that itself looked solid, so still and stable did it lie below my feet; even the track of light from the westering sun shone smoothly, without that animated glitter which tells of an imperceptible ripple. And when I turned my head to take a parting glance at the tug which had just left us anchored outside the bar, I saw the straight line of the flat shore joined to the stable sea, edge to edge, with a perfect and unmarked closeness, in one levelled floor half brown, half blue under the enormous dome of the sky. Corresponding in their insignificance to the islets of the sea, two small clumps of trees, one on each side of the only fault in the impeccable joint, marked the mouth of the river Meinam we had just left on the first preparatory stage of our homeward journey; and, far back on the inland level, a larger and loftier mass, the grove surrounding the great Paknam pagoda, was the only thing on which the eye could rest from the vain task of exploring the monotonous sweep of the horizon. Here and there gleams as of a few scattered pieces of silver marked the windings of the great river; and on the nearest of them, just within the bar, the tug steaming right into the land became lost to my sight, hull and funnel and masts, as though the impassive earth had swal-

lowed her up without an effort, without a tremor. My eye followed the light cloud of her smoke, now here, now there, above the plain, according to the devious curves of the stream, but always fainter and farther away, till I lost it at last behind the mitre-shaped hill of the great pagoda. And then I was left alone with my ship, anchored at the head of the Gulf of Siam.

She floated at the starting-point of a long journey, very still in an immense stillness, the shadows of her spars flung far to the eastward by the setting sun. At that moment I was alone on her decks. There was not a sound in her—and around us nothing moved, nothing lived, not a canoe on the water, not a bird in the air, not a cloud in the sky. In this breathless pause at the threshold of a long passage we seemed to be measuring our fitness for a long and arduous enterprise, the appointed task of both our existences to be carried out, far from all human eyes, with only sky and sea for spectators and for judges.

There must have been some glare in the air to interfere with one's sight, because it was only just before the sun left us that my roaming eyes made out beyond the highest ridge of the principal islet of the group something which did away with the solemnity of perfect solitude. The tide of darkness flowed on swiftly; and with tropical suddenness a swarm of stars came out above the shadowy earth, while I lingered yet, my hand resting lightly on my ship's rail as if on the shoulder of a trusted friend. But, with all that multitude of celestial bodies staring down at one, the comfort of quiet communion with her was gone for good. And there were also disturbing sounds by this time—voices, footsteps forward; the steward flitted along the main-deck, a busily ministering spirit; a hand-bell tinkled urgently under the poop-deck. . . .

I found my two officers waiting for me near the supper table, in the lighted cuddy. We sat down at once, and as I helped the chief mate, I said:

"Are you aware that there is a ship anchored inside the islands? I saw her mastheads above the ridge as the sun went down."

He raised sharply his simple face, overcharged by a terrible growth of whisker, and emitted his usual ejaculations: "Bless my soul, sir! You don't say so!"

My second mate was a round-cheeked, silent young man, grave beyond his years, I thought; but as our eyes happened to meet I de-

tected a slight quiver on his lips. I looked down at once. It was not my part to encourage sneering on board my ship. It must be said, too, that I knew very little of my officers. In consequence of certain events of no particular significance, except to myself, I had been appointed to the command only a fortnight before. Neither did I know much of the hands forward. All these people had been together for eighteen months or so, and my position was that of the only stranger on board. I mention this because it has some bearing on what is to follow. But what I felt most was my being a stranger to the ship; and if all the truth must be told, I was somewhat of a stranger to myself. The youngest man on board (barring the second mate), and untried as yet by a position of the fullest responsibility, I was willing to take the adequacy of the others for granted. They had simply to be equal to their tasks; but I wondered how far I should turn out faithful to that ideal conception of one's own personality every man sets up for himself secretly.

Meantime the chief mate, with an almost visible effect of collaboration on the part of his round eyes and frightful whiskers, was trying to evolve a theory of the anchored ship. His dominant trait was to take all things into earnest consideration. He was of a painstaking turn of mind. As he used to say, he "liked to account to himself" for practically everything that came in his way, down to a miserable scorpion he had found in his cabin a week before. The why and the wherefore of that scorpion—how it got on board and came to select his room rather than the pantry (which was a dark place and more what a scorpion would be partial to), and how on earth it managed to drown itself in the inkwell of his writing-desk—had exercised him infinitely. The ship within the islands was much more easily accounted for; and just as we were about to rise from table he made his pronouncement. She was, he doubted not, a ship from home lately arrived. Probably she drew too much water to cross the bar except at the top of spring tides. Therefore she went into that natural harbour to wait for a few days in preference to remaining in an open roadstead.

"That's so," confirmed the second mate, suddenly, in his slightly hoarse voice. "She draws over twenty feet. She's the Liverpool ship

Sephora with a cargo of coal. Hundred and twenty-three days from Cardiff."

We looked at him in surprise.

"The tugboat skipper told me when he came on board for your letters, sir," explained the young man. "He expects to take her up the river the day after tomorrow."

After thus overwhelming us with the extent of his information he slipped out of the cabin. The mate observed regretfully that he "could not account for that young fellow's whims." What prevented him telling us all about it at once, he wanted to know.

I detained him as he was making a move. For the last two days the crew had had plenty of hard work, and the night before they had very little sleep. I felt painfully that I—a stranger—was doing something unusual when I directed him to let all hands turn in without setting an anchor-watch. I proposed to keep on deck myself till one o'clock or thereabouts. I would get the second mate to relieve me at that hour.

"He will turn out the cook and the steward at four," I concluded, "and then give you a call. Of course at the slightest sign of any sort of wind we'll have the hands up and make a start at once."

He concealed his astonishment. "Very well, sir." Outside the cuddy he put his head in the second mate's door to inform him of my unheard-of caprice to take a five hours' anchor-watch on myself. I heard the other raise his voice incredulously—"What? The Captain himself?" Then a few more murmurs, a door closed, then another. A few moments later I went on deck.

My strangeness, which had made me sleepless, had prompted that unconventional arrangement, as if I had expected in those solitary hours of the night to get on terms with the ship of which I knew nothing, manned by men of whom I knew very little more. Fast alongside a wharf, littered like any ship in port with a tangle of unrelated things, invaded by unrelated shore people, I had hardly seen her yet properly. Now, as she lay cleared for sea, the stretch of her main-deck seemed to me very fine under the stars. Very fine, very roomy for her size, and very inviting. I descended the poop and paced the waist, my mind picturing to myself the coming passage through the Malay Archipelago, down the Indian Ocean, and up the Atlantic. All its phases were familiar enough to me, every characteristic, all the alternatives

which were likely to face me on the high seas—everything! . . . except the novel responsibility of command. But I took heart from the reasonable thought that the ship was like other ships, the men like other men, and that the sea was not likely to keep any special surprises expressly for my discomfiture.

Arrived at that comforting conclusion, I bethought myself of a cigar and went below to get it. All was still down there. Everybody at the after end of the ship was sleeping profoundly. I came out again on the quarter-deck, agreeably at ease in my sleeping-suit on that warm breathless night, farebooted, a glowing cigar in my teeth, and, going forward, I was met by the profound silence of the fore end of the ship. Only as I passed the door of the forecastle I heard a deep, quiet, trustful sigh of some sleeper inside. And suddenly I rejoiced in the great security of the sea as compared with the unrest of the land, in my choice of that untempted life presenting no disquieting problems, invested with an elementary moral beauty by the absolute straightforwardness of its appeal and by the singleness of its purpose.

The riding-light in the fore-rigging burned with a clear, untroubled, as if symbolic, flame, confident and bright in the mysterious shades of the night. Passing on my way aft along the other side of the ship, I observed that the rope side-ladder, put over, no doubt, for the master of the tug when he came to fetch away our letters, had not been hauled in as it should have been. I became annoyed at this, for exactitude in small matters is the very soul of discipline. Then I reflected that I had myself peremptorily dismissed my officers from duty, and by my own act had prevented the anchor-watch being formally set and things properly attended to. I asked myself whether it was wise ever to interfere with the established routine of duties even from the kindest of motives. My action might have made me appear eccentric. Goodness only knew how that absurdly whiskered mate would "account" for my conduct, and what the whole ship thought of that informality of their new captain. I was vexed with myself.

Not from compunction certainly, but, as it were mechanically, I proceeded to get the ladder in myself. Now a side-ladder of that sort is a light affair and comes in easily, yet my vigorous tug, which should have brought it flying on board, merely recoiled upon my body in a totally unexpected jerk. What the devil! . . . I was so astounded by the immovableness of that ladder that I remained stock-still, trying

to account for it to myself like that imbecile mate of mine. In the end, of course, I put my head over the rail.

The side of the ship made an opaque belt of shadow on the darkling glassy shimmer of the sea. But I saw at once something elongated and pale floating very close to the ladder. Before I could form a guess a faint flash of phosphorescent light, which seemed to issue suddenly from the naked body of a man, flickered in the sleeping water with the elusive, silent play of summer lightning in a night sky. With a gasp I saw revealed to my stare a pair of feet, the long legs, a broad livid back immersed right up to the neck in a greenish cadaverous glow. One hand, awash, clutched the bottom rung of the ladder. He was complete but for the head. A headless corpse! The cigar dropped out of my gaping mouth with a tiny plop and a short hiss quite audible in the absolute stillness of all things under heaven. At that I suppose he raised up his face, a dimly pale oval in the shadow of the ship's side. But even then I could only barely make out down there the shape of his black-haired head. However, it was enough for the horrid, frost-bound sensation which had gripped me about the chest to pass off. The moment of vain exclamations was past, too. I only climbed on the spare spar and leaned over the rail as far as I could, to bring my eyes nearer to that mystery floating alongside.

As he hung by the ladder, like a resting swimmer, the sea-lightning played about his limbs at every stir; and he appeared in it ghastly, silvery, fish-like. He remained as mute as a fish, too. He made no motion to get out of the water, either. It was inconceivable that he should not attempt to come on board, and strangely troubling to suspect that perhaps he did not want to. And my first words were prompted by just that troubled incertitude.

"What's the matter?" I asked in my ordinary tone, speaking down to the face upturned exactly under mine.

"Cramp," it answered, no louder. Then slightly anxious, "I say, no need to call any one."

"I was not going to," I said.

"Are you alone on deck?"

"Yes."

I had somehow the impression that he was on the point of letting go the ladder to swim away beyond my ken—mysterious as he came. But, for the moment, this being appearing as if he had risen from the

bottom of the sea (it was certainly the nearest land to the ship) wanted only to know the time. I told him. And he, down there, tentatively:

"I suppose your captain's turned in?"

"I am sure he isn't," I said.

He seemed to struggle with himself, for I heard something like the low, bitter murmur of doubt. "What's the good?" His next words came out with a hesitating effort.

"Look here, my man. Could you call him out quietly?"

I thought the time had come to declare myself.

"*I* am the captain."

I heard a "By Jove!" whispered at the level of the water. The phosphorescence flashed in the swirl of the water all about his limbs, his other hand seized the ladder.

"My name's Leggatt."

The voice was calm and resolute. A good voice. The self-possession of that man had somehow induced a corresponding state in myself. It was very quietly that I remarked:

"You must be a good swimmer."

"Yes. I've been in the water practically since nine o'clock. The question for me now is whether I am to let go this ladder and go on swimming till I sink from exhaustion, or—to come on board here."

I felt this was no mere formula of desperate speech, but a real alternative in the view of a strong soul. I should have gathered from this that he was young; indeed, it is only the young who are ever confronted by such clear issues. But at the time it was pure intuition on my part. A mysterious communication was established already between us two—in the face of that silent, darkened tropical sea. I was young, too; young enough to make no comment. The man in the water began suddenly to climb up the ladder, and I hastened away from the rail to fetch some clothes.

Before entering the cabin I stood still, listening in the lobby at the foot of the stairs. A faint snore came through the closed door of the chief mate's room. The second mate's door was on the hook, but the darkness in there was absolutely soundless. He, too, was young and could sleep like a stone. Remained the steward, but he was not likely to wake up before he was called. I got a sleeping-suit out of my room and, coming back on deck, saw the naked man from the sea sitting on the main-hatch, glimmering white in the darkness, his elbows on his

knees and his head in his hands. In a moment he had concealed his damp body in a sleeping-suit of the same grey-stripe pattern as the one I was wearing and followed me like my double on the poop. Together we moved right aft, barefooted, silent.

"What is it?" I asked in a deadened voice, taking the lighted lamp out of the binnacle, and raising it to his face.

"An ugly business."

He had rather regular features; a good mouth; light eyes under somewhat heavy, dark eyebrows; a smooth, square forehead; no growth on his cheeks; a small, brown moustache, and a well-shaped, round chin. His expression was concentrated, meditative, under the inspecting light of the lamp I held up to his face; such as a man thinking hard in solitude might wear. My sleeping-suit was just right for his size. A well-knit young fellow of twenty-five at most. He caught his lower lip with the edge of white, even teeth.

"Yes," I said, replacing the lamp in the binnacle. The warm, heavy tropical night closed upon his head again.

"There's a ship over there," he murmured.

"Yes, I know. The *Sephora*. Did you know of us?"

"Hadn't the slightest idea. I am the mate of her—" He paused and corrected himself. "I should say I *was*."

"Aha! Something wrong?"

"Yes. Very wrong indeed. I've killed a man."

"What do you mean? Just now?"

"No, on the passage. Weeks ago. Thirty-nine south. When I say a man—"

"Fit of temper," I suggested, confidently.

The shadowy, dark head, like mine, seemed to nod imperceptibly above the ghostly grey of my sleeping-suit. It was, in the night, as though I had been faced by my own reflection in the depths of a sombre and immense mirror.

"A pretty thing to have to own up to for a Conway boy," murmured my double, distinctly.

"You're a Conway boy?"

"I am," he said, as if startled. Then, slowly . . . "Perhaps you too—"

It was so; but being a couple of years older I had left before he joined. After a quick interchange of dates a silence fell; and I thought

suddenly of my absurd mate with his terrific whiskers and the "Bless my soul—you don't say so" type of intellect. My double gave me an inkling of his thoughts by saying: "My father's a parson in Norfolk. Do you see me before a judge and jury on that charge? For myself I can't see the necessity. There are fellows that an angel from heaven—And I am not that. He was one of those creatures that are just simmering all the time with a silly sort of wickedness. Miserable devils that have no business to live at all. He wouldn't do his duty and wouldn't let anybody else do theirs. But what's the good of talking! You know well enough the sort of ill-conditioned snarling cur—"

He appealed to me as if our experiences had been as identical as our clothes. And I knew well enough the pestiferous danger of such a character where there are no means of legal repression. And I knew well enough also that my double there was no homicidal ruffian. I did not think of asking him for details, and he told me the story roughly in brusque, disconnected sentences. I needed no more. I saw it all going on as though I were myself inside that other sleeping-suit.

"It happened while we were setting a reefed foresail, at dusk. Reefed foresail! You understand the sort of weather. The only sail we had left to keep the ship running; so you may guess what it had been like for days. Anxious sort of job, that. He gave me some of his cursed insolence at the sheet. I tell you I was overdone with this terrific weather that seemed to have no end to it. Terrific, I tell you—and a deep ship. I believe the fellow himself was half crazed with funk. It was no time for gentlemanly reproof, so I turned round and felled him like an ox. He up and at me. We closed just as an awful sea made for the ship. All hands saw it coming and took to the rigging, but I had him by the throat, and went on shaking him like a rat, the men above us yelling, 'Look out! look out!' Then a crash as if the sky had fallen on my head. They say that for over ten minutes hardly anything was to be seen of the ship—just the three masts and a bit of the forecastle head and of the poop all awash driving along in a smother of foam. It was a miracle that they found us, jammed together behind the forebits. It's clear that I meant business, because I was holding him by the throat still when they picked us up. He was black in the face. It was too much for them. It seems they rushed us aft together, gripped as we were, screaming 'Murder!' like a lot of lunatics, and broke into the cuddy. And the ship running for

her life, touch and go all the time, any minute her last in a sea fit to turn your hair grey only a-looking at it. I understand that the skipper, too, started raving like the rest of them. The man had been deprived of sleep for more than a week, and to have this sprung on him at the height of a furious gale nearly drove him out of his mind. I wonder they didn't fling me overboard after getting the carcass of their precious ship-mate out of my fingers. They had rather a job to separate us, I've been told. A sufficiently fierce story to make an old judge and a respectable jury sit up a bit. The first thing I heard when I came to myself was the maddening howling of that endless gale, and on that the voice of the old man. He was hanging on to my bunk, staring into my face out of his sou'wester.

" 'Mr. Leggatt, you have killed a man. You can act no longer as chief mate of this ship.' "

His care to subdue his voice made it sound monotonous. He rested a hand on the end of the skylight to steady himself with, and all that time did not stir a limb, so far as I could see. "Nice little tale for a quiet tea-party," he concluded in the same tone.

One of my hands, too, rested on the end of the sky-light! neither did I stir a limb, so far as I knew. We stood less than a foot from each other. It occurred to me that if old "Bless my soul—you don't say so" were to put his head up the companion and catch sight of us, he would think he was seeing double, or imagine himself come upon a scene of weird witchcraft; the strange captain having a quiet confabulation by the wheel with his own grey ghost. I became very much concerned to prevent anything of the sort. I heard the other's soothing undertone.

"My father's a parson in Norfolk," it said. Evidently he had forgotten he had told me this important fact before. Truly a nice little tale.

"You had better slip down into my stateroom now," I said, moving off stealthily. My double followed my movements; our bare feet made no sound; I let him in, closed the door with care, and, after giving a call to the second mate, returned on deck for my relief.

"Not much sign of any wind yet," I remarked when he approached.

"No, sir. Not much," he assented, sleepily, in his hoarse voice, with just enough deference, no more, and barely suppressing a yawn.

"Well, that's all you have to look out for. You have got your orders."

"Yes, sir."

I paced a turn or two on the poop and saw him take up his position face forward with his elbow in the ratlines of the mizzen-rigging before I went below. The mate's faint snoring was still going on peacefully. The cuddy lamp was burning over the table on which stood a vase of flowers, a polite attention from the ship's provision merchant—the last flowers we should see for the next three months at the very least. Two bunches of bananas hung from the beam symmetrically, one on each side of the rudder-casing. Everything was as before in the ship —except that two of her captain's sleeping-suits were simultaneously in use, one motionless in the cuddy, the other keeping very still in the captain's stateroom.

It must be explained here that my cabin had the form of the capital letter L, the door being within the angle and opening into the short part of the letter. A couch was to the left, the bed-place to the right; my writing-desk and the chronometers' table faced the door. But any one opening it, unless he stepped right inside, had no view of what I call the long (or vertical) part of the letter. It contained some lockers surmounted by a bookcase; and a few clothes, a thick jacket or two, caps, oilskin coat, and such like, hung on hooks. There was at the bottom of that part a door opening into my bath-room, which could be entered also directly from the saloon. But that way was never used.

The mysterious arrival had discovered the advantage of this particular shape. Entering my room, lighted strongly by a big bulkhead lamp swung on gimbals above my writing-desk, I did not see him anywhere till he stepped out quietly from behind the coats hung in the recessed part.

"I heard somebody moving about, and went in there at once," he whispered.

I, too, spoke under my breath.

"Nobody is likely to come in here without knocking and getting permission."

He nodded. His face was thin and the sunburn faded, as though he had been ill. And no wonder. He had been, I heard presently, kept under arrest in his cabin for nearly seven weeks. But there was nothing sickly in his eyes or in his expression. He was not a bit like

me, really; yet, as we stood leaning over my bed-place, whispering side by side, with our dark heads together and our backs to the door, anybody bold enough to open it stealthily would have been treated to the uncanny sight of a double captain busy talking in whispers with his other self.

"But all this doesn't tell me how you came to hang on to our side-ladder," I inquired, in the hardly audible murmurs we used, after he had told me something more of the proceedings on board the *Sephora* once the bad weather was over.

"When we sighted Java Head I had had time to think all those matters out several times over. I had six weeks of doing nothing else, and with only an hour or so every evening for a tramp on the quarter-deck."

He whispered, his arms folded on the side of my bed-place, staring through the open port. And I could imagine perfectly the manner of this thinking out—a stubborn if not a steadfast operation; something of which I should have been perfectly incapable.

"I reckoned it would be dark before we closed with the land," he continued, so low that I had to strain my hearing, near as we were to each other, shoulder touching shoulder almost. "So I asked to speak to the old man. He always seemed very sick when he came to see me —as if he could not look me in the face. You know, that foresail saved the ship. She was too deep to have run long under bare poles. And it was I that managed to set it for him. Anyway, he came. When I had him in my cabin—he stood by the door looking at me as if I had the halter round my neck already—I asked him right away to leave my cabin door unlocked at night while the ship was going through Sunda Straits. There would be the Java coast within two or three miles, off Angier Point. I wanted nothing more. I've had a prize for swimming my second year in the Conway."

"I can believe it," I breathed out.

"God only knows why they locked me in every night. To see some of their faces you'd have thought they were afraid I'd go about at night strangling people. Am I a murdering brute? Do I look it? By Jove! if I had been he wouldn't have trusted himself like that into my room. You'll say I might have chucked him aside and bolted out, there and then—it was dark already. Well, no. And for the same reason I wouldn't think of trying to smash the door. There

would have been a rush to stop me at the noise, and I did not mean to get into a confounded scrimmage. Somebody else might have got killed—for I would not have broken out only to get chucked back, and I did not want any more of that work. He refused, looking more sick than ever. He was afraid of the men, and also of that old second mate of his who had been sailing with him for years—a grey-headed old humbug; and his steward, too, had been with him devil knows how long—seventeen years or more—a dogmatic sort of loafer who hated me like poison, just because I was the chief mate. No chief mate ever made more than one voyage in the *Sephora,* you know. Those two old chaps ran the ship. Devil only knows what the skipper wasn't afraid of (all his nerve went to pieces altogether in that hellish spell of bad weather we had)—of what the law would do to him—of his wife, perhaps. Oh, yes! she's on board. Though I don't think she would have meddled. She would have been only too glad to have me out of the ship in any way. The 'brand of Cain' business, don't you see. That's all right. I was ready enough to go off wandering on the face of the earth—and that was price enough to pay for an Abel of that sort. Anyhow, he wouldn't listen to me. 'This thing must take its course. I represent the law here.' He was shaking like a leaf. 'So you won't?' 'No!' 'Then I hope you will be able to sleep on that,' I said, and turned my back on him. 'I wonder that *you* can,' cries he, and locks the door.

"Well, after that, I couldn't. Not very well. That was three weeks ago. We have had a slow passage through the Java Sea; drifted about Carimata for ten days. When we anchored here they thought, I suppose, it was all right. The nearest land (and that's five miles) is the ship's destination; the consul would soon set about catching me; and there would have been no object in bolting to these islets there. I don't suppose there's a drop of water on them. I don't know how it was, but tonight that steward, after bringing me my supper, went out to let me eat it, and left the door unlocked. And I ate it—all there was, too. After I had finished I strolled out on the quarter-deck. I don't know that I meant to do anything. A breath of fresh air was all I wanted, I believe. Then a sudden temptation came over me. I kicked off my slippers and was in the water before I had made up my mind fairly. Somebody heard the splash and they raised an awful hullabaloo. 'He's gone! Lower the boats! He's committed suicide!

No, he's swimming.' Certainly I was swimming. It's not so easy for a swimmer like me to commit suicide by drowning. I landed on the nearest islet before the boat left the ship's side. I heard them pulling about in the dark, hailing, and so on, but after a bit they gave up. Everything quieted down and the anchorage became as still as death. I sat down on a stone and began to think. I felt certain they would start searching for me at daylight. There was no place to hide on those stony things—and if there had been, what would have been the good? But now I was clear of that ship, I was not going back. So after a while I took off all my clothes, tied them up in a bundle with a stone inside, and dropped them in the deep water on the outer side of that islet. That was suicide enough for me. Let them think what they liked, but I didn't mean to drown myself. I meant to swim till I sank—but that's not the same thing. I struck out for another of these little islands, and it was from that one that I first saw your riding-light. Something to swim for. I went on easily, and on the way I came upon a flat rock a foot or two above water. In the daytime, I dare say, you might make it out with a glass from your poop. I scrambled up on it and rested myself for a bit. Then I made another start. That last spell must have been over a mile."

His whisper was getting fainter and fainter, and all the time he stared straight out through the port-hole, in which there was not even a star to be seen. I had not interrupted him. There was something that made comment impossible in his narrative, or perhaps in himself; a sort of feeling, a quality, which I can't find a name for. And when he ceased, all I found was a futile whisper: "So you swam for our light?"

"Yes—straight for it. It was something to swim for. I couldn't see any stars low down because the coast was in the way, and I couldn't see the land, either. The water was like glass. One might have been swimming in a confounded thousand-feet deep cistern with no place for scrambling out anywhere; but what I didn't like was the notion of swimming round and round like a crazed bullock before I gave out; and as I didn't mean to go back . . . No. Do you see me being hauled back stark naked, off one of these little islands by the scruff of the neck and fighting like a wild beast? Somebody would have got killed for certain, and I did not want any of that. So I went on. Then your ladder—"

"Why didn't you hail the ship?" I asked, a little louder.

He touched my shoulder lightly. Lazy footsteps came right over our heads and stopped. The second mate had crossed from the other side of the poop and might have been hanging over the rail, for all we knew.

"He couldn't hear us talking—could he?" My double breathed into my very ear, anxiously.

His anxiety was an answer, a sufficient answer, to the question I had put to him. An answer containing all the difficulty of that situation. I closed the port-hole quietly, to make sure. A louder word might have been overheard.

"Who's that?" he whispered then.

"My second mate. But I don't know much more of the fellow than you do."

And I told him a little about myself. I had been appointed to take charge while I least expected anything of the sort, not quite a fortnight ago. I didn't know either the ship or the people. Hadn't had the time in port to look about me or size anybody up. And as to the crew, all they knew was that I was appointed to take the ship home. For the rest, I was almost as much of a stranger on board as himself, I said. And at the moment I felt it most acutely. I felt that it would take very little to make me a suspect person in the eyes of the ship's company.

He had turned about meantime; and we, the two strangers in the ship, faced each other in identical attitudes.

"Your ladder—" he murmured, after a silence. "Who'd have thought of finding a ladder hanging over at night in a ship anchored out here! I felt just then a very unpleasant faintness. After the life I've been leading for nine weeks, anybody would have got out of condition. I wasn't capable of swimming round as far as your rudder-chains. And, lo and behold! there was a ladder to get hold of. After I gripped it I said to myself, 'What's the good?' When I saw a man's head looking over I thought I would swim away presently and leave him shouting—in whatever language it was. I didn't mind being looked at. I—I liked it. And then you speaking to me so quietly—as if you had expected me—made me hold on a little longer. It had been a confounded lonely time—I don't mean while swimming. I was glad to talk a little to somebody that didn't belong to the

Sephora. As to asking for the captain, that was a mere impulse. It could have been no use, with all the ship knowing about me and the other people pretty certain to be round here in the morning. I don't know—I wanted to be seen, to talk with somebody, before I went on. I don't know what I would have said. . . . 'Fine night, isn't it?' or something of the sort."

"Do you think they will be round here presently?" I asked with some incredulity.

"Quite likely," he said, faintly.

He looked extremely haggard all of a sudden. His head rolled on his shoulders.

"H'm. We shall see then. Meantime get into that bed," I whispered. "Want help? There."

It was a rather high bed-place with a set of drawers underneath. This amazing swimmer really needed the lift I gave him by seizing his leg. He tumbled in, rolled over on his back, and flung one arm across his eyes. And then, with his face nearly hidden, he must have looked exactly as I used to look in that bed. I gazed upon my other self for a while before drawing across carefully the two green serge curtains which ran on a brass rod. I thought for a moment of pinning them together for greater safety, but I sat down on the couch, and once there I felt unwilling to rise and hunt for a pin. I would do it in a moment. I was extremely tired, in a peculiarly intimate way, by the strain of stealthiness, by the effort of whispering and the general secrecy of this excitement. It was three o'clock by now and I had been on my feet since nine, but I was not sleepy; I could not have gone to sleep. I sat there, fagged out, looking at the curtains, trying to clear my mind of the confused sensation of being in two places at once, and greatly bothered by an exasperating knocking in my head. It was a relief to discover suddenly that it was not in my head at all, but on the outside of the door. Before I could collect myself the words "Come in" were out of my mouth, and the steward entered with a tray, bringing in my morning coffee. I had slept, after all, and I was so frightened that I shouted, "This way! I am here, steward," as though he had been miles away. He put down the tray on the table next the couch and only then said, very quietly, "I can see you are here, sir." I felt him give me a keen look, but I dared not meet his eyes just then. He must have wondered why I had drawn

the curtains of my bed before going to sleep on the couch. He went out, hooking the door open as usual.

I heard the crew washing decks above me. I knew I would have been told at once if there had been any wind. Calm, I thought, and I was doubly vexed. Indeed, I felt dual more than ever. The steward reappeared suddenly in the doorway. I jumped up from the couch so quickly that he gave a start.

"What do you want here?"

"Close your port, sir—they are washing decks."

"It is closed," I said, reddening.

"Very well, sir." But he did not move from the doorway and returned my stare in an extraordinary, equivocal manner for a time. Then his eyes wavered, all his expression changed, and in a voice unusually gentle, almost coaxingly:

"May I come in to take the empty cup away, sir?"

"Of course!" I turned my back on him while he popped in and out. Then I unhooked and closed the door and even pushed the bolt. This sort of thing could not go on very long. The cabin was as hot as an oven, too. I took a peep at my double, and discovered that he had not moved, his arm was still over his eyes; but his chest heaved; his hair was wet; his chin glistened with perspiration. I reached over him and opened the port.

"I must show myself on deck," I reflected.

Of course, theoretically, I could do what I liked, with no one to say nay to me within the whole circle of the horizon; but to lock my cabin door and take the key away I did not dare. Directly I put my head out of the companion I saw the group of my two officers, the second mate barefooted, the chief mate in long india-rubber boots, near the break of the poop, and the steward half-way down the poop-ladder talking to them eagerly. He happened to catch sight of me and dived, the second ran down on the main-deck shouting some order or other, and the chief mate came to meet me, touching his cap.

There was a sort of curiosity in his eye that I did not like. I don't know whether the steward had told them that I was "queer" only, or downright drunk, but I know the man meant to have a good look at me. I watched him coming with a smile which, as he got into point-blank range, took effect and froze his very whiskers. I did not give him time to open his lips.

"Square the yards by lifts and braces before the hands go to breakfast."

It was the first particular order I had given on board that ship; and I stayed on deck to see it executed, too. I had felt the need of asserting myself without loss of time. That sneering young cub got taken down a peg or two on that occasion, and I also seized the opportunity of having a good look at the face of every foremast man as they filed past me to go to the after braces. At breakfast time, eating nothing myself, I presided with such frigid dignity that the two mates were only too glad to escape from the cabin as soon as decency permitted; and all the time the dual working of my mind distracted me almost to the point of insanity. I was constantly watching myself, my secret self, as dependent on my actions as my own personality, sleeping in that bed, behind that door which faced me as I sat at the head of the table. It was very much like being mad, only it was worse because one was aware of it.

I had to shake him for a solid minute, but when at last he opened his eyes it was in the full possession of his senses, with an inquiring look.

"All's well so far," I whispered. "Now you must vanish into the bath-room."

He did so, as noiseless as a ghost, and then I rang for the steward, and facing him boldly, directed him to tidy up my stateroom while I was having my bath—"and be quick about it." As my tone admitted of no excuses, he said, "Yes, sir," and ran off to fetch his dustpan and brushes. I took a bath and did most of my dressing, splashing, and whistling softly for the steward's edification, while the secret sharer of my life stood drawn up bolt upright in that little space, his face looking very sunken in daylight, his eyelids lowered under the stern, dark line of his eyebrows drawn together by a slight frown.

When I left him there to go back to my room the steward was finishing dusting. I sent for the mate and engaged him in some insignificant conversation. It was, as it were, trifling with the terrific character of his whiskers; but my object was to give him an opportunity for a good look at my cabin. And then I could at last shut, with a clear conscience, the door of my stateroom and get my double back into the recessed part. There was nothing else for it. He had to sit still on a small folding stool, half smothered by the heavy coats hang-

ing there. We listened to the steward going into the bath-room out of the saloon, filling the water-bottles there, scrubbing the bath, setting things to rights, whisk, bang, clatter—out again into the saloon —turn the key—click. Such was my scheme for keeping my second self invisible. Nothing better could be contrived under the circumstances. And there we sat; I at my writing-desk ready to appear busy with some papers, he behind me out of sight of the door. It would not have been prudent to talk in daytime; and I could not have stood the excitement of that queer sense of whispering to myself. Now and then, glancing over my shoulder, I saw him far back there, sitting rigidly on the low stool, his bare feet close together, his arms folded, his head hanging on his breast—and perfectly still. Anybody would have taken him for me.

I was fascinated by it myself. Every moment I had to glance over my shoulder. I was looking at him when a voice outside the door said:

"Beg pardon, sir."

"Well!" . . . I kept my eyes on him, and so when the voice outside the door announced, "There's a ship's boat coming our way, sir," I saw him give a start—the first movement he had made for hours. But he did not raise his bowed head.

"All right. Get the ladder over."

I hesitated. Should I whisper something to him? But what? His immobility seemed to have been never disturbed. What could I tell him he did not know already? . . . Finally I went on deck.

II

The skipper of the *Sephora* had a thin red whisker all round his face, and the sort of complexion that goes with hair of that colour; also the particular, rather smeary shade of blue in the eyes. He was not exactly a showy figure; his shoulders were high, his stature but middling—one leg slightly more bandy than the other. He shook hands, looking vaguely around. A spiritless tenacity was his main characteristic, I judged. I behaved with a politeness which seemed to disconcert him. Perhaps he was shy. He mumbled to me as if he were ashamed of what he was saying; gave his name (it was something like Archbold—but at this distance of years I hardly am sure), his ship's

name, and a few other particulars of that sort, in the manner of a criminal making a reluctant and doleful confession. He had had terrible weather on the passage out—terrible—terrible—wife aboard, too.

By this time we were seated in the cabin and the steward brought in a tray with a bottle and glasses. "Thanks! No." Never took liquor. Would have some water, though. He drank two tumblerfuls. Terrible thirsty work. Ever since daylight had been exploring the islands round his ship.

"What was that for—fun?" I asked, with an appearance of polite interest.

"No!" He sighed. "Painful duty."

As he persisted in his mumbling and I wanted my double to hear every word, I hit upon the notion of informing him that I regretted to say I was hard of hearing.

"Such a young man, too!" he nodded, keeping his smeary blue, unintelligent eyes fastened upon me. What was the cause of it—some disease? he inquired, without the least sympathy and as if he thought that, if so, I'd got no more than I deserved.

"Yes; disease," I admitted in a cheerful tone which seemed to shock him. But my point was gained, because he had to raise his voice to give me his tale. It is not worth while to record that version. It was just over two months since all this had happened, and he had thought so much about it that he seemed completely muddled as to its bearings, but still immensely impressed.

"What would you think of such a thing happening on board your own ship? I've had the *Sephora* for these fifteen years. I am a well-known shipmaster."

He was densely distressed—and perhaps I should have sympathised with him if I had been able to detach my mental vision from the unsuspected sharer of my cabin as though he were my second self. There he was on the other side of the bulkhead, four or five feet from us, no more, as we sat in the saloon. I looked politely at Captain Archbold (if that was his name), but it was the other I saw, in a grey sleeping-suit, seated on a low stool, his bare feet close together, his arms folded, and every word said between us falling into the ears of his dark head bowed on his chest.

"I have been at sea now, man and boy, for seven-and-thirty years,

and I've never heard of such a thing happening in an English ship. And that it should be my ship. Wife on board, too."

I was hardly listening to him.

"Don't you think," I said, "that the heavy sea which, you told me, came aboard just then might have killed the man? I have seen the sheer weight of a sea kill a man very neatly, by simply breaking his neck."

"Good God!" he uttered, impressively, fixing his smeary blue eyes on me. "The sea! No man killed by the sea ever looked like that." He seemed positively scandalised at my suggestion. And as I gazed at him, certainly not prepared for anything original on his part, he advanced his head close to mine and thrust his tongue out at me so suddenly that I couldn't help starting back.

After scoring over my calmness in this graphic way he nodded wisely. If I had seen the sight, he assured me, I would never forget it as long as I lived. The weather was too bad to give the corpse a proper sea burial. So next day at dawn they took it up on the poop, covering its face with a bit of bunting; he read a short prayer, and then, just as it was, in its oilskins and long boots, they launched it amongst those mountainous seas that seemed ready every moment to swallow up the ship herself and the terrified lives on board of her.

"That reefed foresail saved you," I threw in.

"Under God—it did," he exclaimed fervently. "It was by a special mercy, I firmly believe, that it stood some of those hurricane squalls."

"It was the setting of that sail which—" I began.

"God's own hand in it," he interrupted me. "Nothing less could have done it. I don't mind telling you that I hardly dared give the order. It seemed impossible that we could touch anything without losing it, and then our last hope would have been gone."

The terror of that gale was on him yet. I let him go on for a bit, then said, casually—as if returning to a minor subject:

"You were very anxious to give up your mate to the shore people, I believe?"

He was. To the law. His obscure tenacity on that point had in it something incomprehensible and a little awful; something, as it were, mystical, quite apart from his anxiety that he should not be suspected of "countenancing any doings of that sort." Seven-and-thirty virtuous years at sea, of which over twenty of immaculate command, and the

last fifteen in the *Sephora,* seemed to have laid him under some pitiless obligation.

"And you know," he went on, groping shamefacedly amongst his feelings, "I did not engage that young fellow. His people had some interest with my owners. I was in a way forced to take him on. He looked very smart, very gentlemanly, and all that. But do you know —I never liked him, somehow. I am a plain man. You see, he wasn't exactly the sort for the chief mate of a ship like the *Sephora.*"

I had become so connected in thoughts and impressions with the secret sharer of my cabin that I felt as if I, personally, were being given to understand that I, too, was not the sort that would have done for the chief mate of a ship like the *Sephora.* I had no doubt of it in my mind.

"Not at all the style of man. You understand," he insisted, superfluously, looking hard at me.

I smiled urbanely. He seemed at a loss for a while.

"I suppose I must report a suicide."

"Beg pardon?"

"Sui-cide! That's what I'll have to write to my owners directly I get in."

"Unless you manage to recover him before tomorrow," I assented, dispassionately. . . . "I mean, alive."

He mumbled something which I really did not catch, and I turned my ear to him in a puzzled manner. He fairly bawled:

"The land—I say, the mainland is at least seven miles off my anchorage."

"About that."

My lack of excitement, of curiosity, of surprise, of any sort of pronounced interest, began to arouse his distrust. But except for the felicitous pretence of deafness I had not tried to pretend anything. I had felt utterly incapable of playing the part of ignorance properly, and therefore was afraid to try. It is also certain that he had brought some ready-made suspicions with him, and that he viewed my politeness as a strange and unnatural phenomenon. And yet how else could I have received him? Not heartily! That was impossible for psychological reasons, which I need not state here. My only object was to keep off his inquiries. Surlily? Yes, but surliness might have provoked a point-blank question. From its novelty to him and from its

nature, punctilious courtesy was the manner best calculated to restrain the man. But there was the danger of his breaking through my defence bluntly. I could not, I think, have met him by a direct lie, also for psychological (not moral) reasons. If he had only known how afraid I was of his putting my feeling of identity with the other to the test! But, strangely enough—(I thought of it only afterwards)—I believe that he was not a little disconcerted by the reverse side of that weird situation, by something in me that reminded him of the man he was seeking—suggested a mysterious similitude to the young fellow he had distrusted and disliked from the first.

However that might have been, the silence was not very prolonged. He took another oblique step.

"I reckon I had no more than a two-mile pull to your ship. Not a bit more."

"And quite enough, too, in this awful heat," I said.

Another pause full of mistrust followed. Necessity, they say, is mother of invention, but fear, too, is not barren of ingenious suggestions. And I was afraid he would ask me point-blank for news of my other self.

"Nice little saloon, isn't it?" I remarked, as if noticing for the first time the way his eyes roamed from one closed door to the other. "And very well fitted out, too. Here, for instance," I continued, reaching over the back of my seat negligently, and flinging the door open, "is my bath-room."

He made an eager movement, but hardly gave it a glance. I got up, shut the door of the bath-room, and invited him to have a look round, as if I were very proud of my accommodation. He had to rise and be shown round, but he went through the business without any raptures whatever.

"And now we'll have a look at my stateroom," I declared, in a voice as loud as I dared to make it, crossing the cabin to the starboard side with purposely heavy steps.

He followed me in and gazed around. My intelligent double had vanished. I played my part.

"Very convenient—isn't it?"

"Very nice. Very comf . . ." He didn't finish and went out brusquely as if to escape from some unrighteous wiles of mine. But it was not to be. I had been too frightened not to feel vengeful; I felt

I had him on the run, and I meant to keep him on the run. My polite insistence must have had something menacing in it, because he gave in suddenly. And I did not let him off a single item; mate's room, pantry, storerooms, the very sail-locker which was also under the poop—he had to look into them all. When at last I showed him out on the quarter-deck he drew a long, spiritless sigh, and mumbled dismally that he must really be going back to his ship now. I desired my mate, who had joined us, to see to the captain's boat.

The man of whiskers gave a blast on the whistle which he used to wear hanging round his neck, and yelled, "*Sephora's* away!" My double down there in my cabin must have heard, and certainly could not feel more relieved than I. Four fellows came running out from somewhere forward and went over the side, while my own men, appearing on deck too, lined the rail. I escorted my visitor to the gangway ceremoniously, and nearly overdid it. He was a tenacious beast. On the very ladder he lingered, and in that unique, guiltily conscientious manner of sticking to the point:

"I say . . . you . . . you don't think that—"

I covered his voice loudly:

"Certainly not. . . . I am delighted. Good-bye."

I had an idea of what he meant to say, and just saved myself by the privilege of defective hearing. He was too shaken generally to insist, but my mate, close witness of that parting, looked mystified and his face took on a thoughtful cast. As I did not want to appear as if I wished to avoid all communication with my officers, he had the opportunity to address me.

"Seems a very nice man. His boat's crew told our chaps a very extraordinary story, if what I am told by the steward is true. I suppose you had it from the captain, sir?"

"Yes. I had a story from the captain."

"A very horrible affair—isn't it, sir?"

"It is."

"Beats all these tales we hear about murders in Yankee ships."

"I don't think it beats them. I don't think it resembles them in the least."

"Bless my soul—you don't say so! But of course I've no acquaintance whatever with American ships, not I, so I couldn't go against your knowledge. It's horrible enough for me. . . . But the queerest part is

that those fellows seemed to have some idea the man was hidden aboard here. They had really. Did you ever hear of such a thing?"

"Preposterous—isn't it?"

We were walking to and fro athwart the quarter-deck. No one of the crew forward could be seen (the day was Sunday), and the mate pursued:

"There was some little dispute about it. Our chaps took offence. 'As if we would harbour a thing like that,' they said. 'Wouldn't you like to look for him in our coal-hole?' Quite a tiff. But they made it up in the end. I suppose he did drown himself. Don't you, sir?"

"I don't suppose anything."

"You have no doubt in the matter, sir?"

"None whatever."

I left him suddenly. I felt I was producing a bad impression, but with my double down there it was most trying to be on deck. And it was almost as trying to be below. Altogether a nerve-trying situation. But on the whole I felt less torn in two when I was with him. There was no one in the whole ship whom I dared take into my confidence. Since the hands had got to know his story, it would have been impossible to pass him off for any one else, and an accidental discovery was to be dreaded now more than ever. . . .

The steward being engaged in laying the table for dinner, we could talk only with our eyes when I first went down. Later in the afternoon we had a cautious try at whispering. The Sunday quietness of the ship was against us; the stillness of air and water around her was against us; the elements, the men were against us—everything was against us in our secret partnership; time itself—for this could not go on forever. The very trust in Providence was, I suppose, denied to his guilt. Shall I confess that this thought cast me down very much? And as to the chapter of accidents which counts for so much in the book of success, I could only hope that it was closed. For what favourable accident could be expected?

"Did you hear everything?" were my first words as soon as we took up our position side by side, leaning over my bed-place.

He had. And the proof of it was his earnest whisper, "The man told you he hardly dared to give the order."

I understood the reference to be to that saving foresail.

"Yes. He was afraid of it being lost in the setting."

"I assure you he never gave the order. He may think he did, but he never gave it. He stood there with me on the break of the poop after the maintopsail blew away, and whimpered about our last hope—positively whimpered about it and nothing else—and the night coming on! To hear one's skipper go on like that in such weather was enough to drive any fellow out of his mind. It worked me up into a sort of desperation. I just took it into my own hands and went away from him, boiling, and— But what's the use telling you? *You* know! . . . Do you think that if I had not been pretty fierce with them I should have got the men to do anything? Not it! The bo's'n perhaps? Perhaps! It wasn't a heavy sea—it was a sea gone mad! I suppose the end of the world will be something like that; and a man may have the heart to see it coming once and be done with it—but to have to face it day after day— I don't blame anybody. I was precious little better than the rest. Only—I was an officer of that old coal-wagon, anyhow—"

"I quite understand," I conveyed that sincere assurance into his ear. He was out of breath with whispering; I could hear him pant slightly. It was all very simple. The same strung-up force which had given twenty-four men a chance, at least, for their lives, had, in a sort of recoil, crushed an unworthy mutinous existence.

But I had no leisure to weigh the merits of the matter—footsteps in the saloon, a heavy knock. "There's enough wind to get under way with, sir." Here was the call of a new claim upon my thoughts and even upon my feelings.

"Turn the hands up," I cried through the door. "I'll be up directly."

I was going out to make the acquaintance of my ship. Before I left the cabin our eyes met—the eyes of the only two strangers on board. I pointed to the recessed part where the little camp-stool awaited him and laid my finger on my lips. He made a gesture—somewhat vague—a little mysterious, accompanied by a faint smile, as if of regret.

This is not the place to enlarge upon the sensations of a man who feels for the first time a ship move under his feet to his own independent word. In my case they were not unalloyed. I was not wholly alone with my command; for there was that stranger in my cabin. Or rather, I was not completely and wholly with her. Part of me was absent. That mental feeling of being in two places at once affected me physically as if the mood of secrecy had penetrated my very soul.

Before an hour had elapsed since the ship had begun to move, having occasion to ask the mate (he stood by my side) to take a compass bearing of the Pagoda, I caught myself reaching up to his ear in whispers. I say I caught myself, but enough had escaped to startle the man. I can't describe it otherwise than by saying that he shied. A grave, preoccupied manner, as though he were in possession of some perplexing intelligence, did not leave him henceforth. A little later I moved away from the rail to look at the compass with such a stealthy gait that the helmsman noticed it—and I could not help noticing the unusual roundness of his eyes. These are trifling instances, though it's to no commander's advantage to be suspected by ludicrous eccentricities. But I was also more seriously affected. There are to a seaman certain words, gestures, that should in given conditions come as naturally, as instinctively as the winking of a menaced eye. A certain order should spring onto his lips without thinking; a certain sign should get itself made, so to speak, without reflection. But all unconscious alertness had abandoned me. I had to make an effort of will to recall myself back (from the cabin) to the conditions of the moment. I felt that I was appearing an irresolute commander to those people who were watching me more or less critically.

And, besides, there were the scares. On the second day out, for instance, coming off the deck in the afternoon (I had straw slippers on my bare feet) I stopped at the open pantry door and spoke to the steward. He was doing something there with his back to me. At the sound of my voice he nearly jumped out of his skin, as the saying is, and incidentally broke a cup.

"What on earth's the matter with you?" I asked, astonished.

He was extremely confused. "Beg your pardon, sir. I made sure you were in your cabin."

"You see I wasn't."

"No, sir. I could have sworn I had heard you moving in there not a moment ago. It's most extraordinary . . . very sorry, sir."

I passed on with an inward shudder. I was so identified with my secret double that I did not even mention the fact in those scanty, fearful whispers we exchanged. I suppose he had made some slight noise of some kind or other. It would have been miraculous if he hadn't at one time or another. And yet, haggard as he appeared, he looked always perfectly self-controlled, more than calm—almost in-

vulnerable. On my suggestion he remained almost entirely in the bath-room, which, upon the whole, was the safest place. There could be really no shadow of an excuse for any one ever wanting to go in there, once the steward had done with it. It was a very tiny place. Sometimes he reclined on the floor, his legs bent, his head sustained on one elbow. At others I would find him on the camp-stool, sitting in his grey sleeping-suit and with his cropped dark hair like a patient, unmoved convict. At night I would smuggle him into my bed-place, and we would whisper together, with the regular footfalls of the officer of the watch passing and repassing over our heads. It was an infinitely miserable time. It was lucky that some tins of fine preserves were stowed in a locker in my stateroom; hard bread I could always get hold of; and so he lived on stewed chicken, paté de foie gras, asparagus, cooked oysters, sardines—on all sorts of abominable sham delicacies out of tins. My early morning coffee he always drank; and it was all I dared do for him in that respect.

Every day there was the horrible manœuvring to go through so that my room and then the bath-room should be done in the usual way. I came to hate the sight of the steward, to abhor the voice of that harmless man. I felt that it was he who would bring on the disaster of discovery. It hung like a sword over our heads.

The fourth day out, I think (we were then working down the east side of the Gulf of Siam, tack for tack, in light winds and smooth water)—the fourth day, I say, of this miserable juggling with the unavoidable, as we sat at our evening meal, that man, whose slightest movement I dreaded, after putting down the dishes ran up on deck busily. This could not be dangerous. Presently he came down again; and then it appeared that he had remembered a coat of mine which I had thrown over a rail to dry after having been wetted in a shower which had passed over the ship in the afternoon. Sitting stolidly at the head of the table I became terrified at the sight of the garment on his arm. Of course he made for my door. There was no time to lose.

"Steward," I thundered. My nerves were so shaken that I could not govern my voice and conceal my agitation. This was the sort of thing that made my terrifically whiskered mate tap his forehead with his forefinger. I had detected him using that gesture while talking on deck with a confidential air to the carpenter. It was too far to hear a

word, but I had no doubt that this pantomime could only refer to the strange new captain.

"Yes, sir," the pale-faced steward turned resignedly to me. It was this maddening course of being shouted at, checked without rhyme or reason, arbitrarily chased out of my cabin, suddenly called into it, sent flying out of his pantry on incomprehensible errands, that accounted for the growing wretchedness of his expression.

"Where are you going with that coat?"

"To your room, sir."

"Is there another shower coming?"

"I'm sure I don't know, sir. Shall I go up again and see, sir?"

"No! never mind."

My object was attained, as of course my other self in there would have heard everything that passed. During this interlude my two officers never raised their eyes off their respective plates; but the lip of that confounded cub, the second mate, quivered visibly.

I expected the steward to hook my coat on and come out at once. He was very slow about it; but I dominated my nervousness sufficiently not to shout after him. Suddenly I became aware (it could be heard plainly enough) that the fellow for some reason or other was opening the door of the bath-room. It was the end. The place was literally not big enough to swing a cat in. My voice died in my throat and I went stony all over. I expected to hear a yell of surprise and terror, and made a movement, but had not the strength to get on my legs. Everything remained still. Had my second self taken the poor wretch by the throat? I don't know what I could have done next moment if I had not seen the steward come out of my room, close the door, and then stand quietly by the sideboard.

"Saved," I thought. "But, no! Lost! Gone! He was gone!"

I laid my knife and fork down and leaned back in my chair. My head swam. After a while, when sufficiently recovered to speak in a steady voice, I instructed my mate to put the ship round at eight o'clock himself.

"I won't come on deck," I went on. "I think I'll turn in, and unless the wind shifts I don't want to be disturbed before midnight. I feel a bit seedy."

"You did look middling bad a little while ago," the chief mate remarked without showing any great concern.

They both went out, and I stared at the steward clearing the table. There was nothing to be read on that wretched man's face. But why did he avoid my eyes I asked myself. Then I thought I should like to hear the sound of his voice.

"Steward!"

"Sir!" Startled as usual.

"Where did you hang up that coat?"

"In the bath-room, sir." The usual anxious tone. "It's not quite dry yet, sir."

For some time longer I sat in the cuddy. Had my double vanished as he had come? But of his coming there was an explanation, whereas his disappearance would be inexplicable. . . . I went slowly into my dark room, shut the door, lighted the lamp, and for a time dared not turn round. When at last I did I saw him standing bolt-upright in the narrow recessed part. It would not be true to say I had a shock, but an irresistible doubt of his bodily existence flitted through my mind. Can it be, I asked myself, that he is not visible to other eyes than mine? It was like being haunted. Motionless, with a grave face, he raised his hands slightly at me in a gesture which meant clearly, "Heavens! what a narrow escape!" Narrow indeed. I think I had come creeping quietly as near insanity as any man who has not actually gone over the border. That gesture restrained me, so to speak.

The mate with the terrific whiskers was now putting the ship on the other tack. In the moment of profound silence which follows upon the hands going to their stations I heard on the poop his raised voice: "Hard alee!" and the distant shout of the order repeated on the main-deck. The sails, in that light breeze, made but a faint fluttering noise. It ceased. The ship was coming round slowly; I held my breath in the renewed stillness of expectation; one wouldn't have thought that there was a single living soul on her decks. A sudden brisk shout, "Mainsail haul!" broke the spell, and in the noisy cries and rush overhead of the men running away with the main-brace we two, down in my cabin, came together in our usual position by the bed-place.

He did not wait for my question. "I heard him fumbling here and just managed to squat myself down in the bath," he whispered to me. "The fellow only opened the door and put his arm in to hang the coat up. All the same—"

"I never thought of that," I whispered back, even more appalled than before at the closeness of the shave, and marvelling at that something unyielding in his character which was carrying him through so finely. There was no agitation in his whisper. Whoever was being driven distracted, it was not he. He was sane. And the proof of his sanity was continued when he took up the whispering again.

"It would never do for me to come to life again."

It was something that a ghost might have said. But what he was alluding to was his old captain's reluctant admission of the theory of suicide. It would obviously serve his turn—if I had understood at all the view which seemed to govern the unalterable purpose of his action.

"You must maroon me as soon as ever you can get amongst these islands off the Cambodje shore," he went on.

"Maroon you! We are not living in a boy's adventure tale," I protested. His scornful whispering took me up.

"We aren't indeed! There's nothing of a boy's tale in this. But there's nothing else for it. I want no more. You don't suppose I am afraid of what can be done to me? Prison or gallows or whatever they may please. But you don't see me coming back to explain such things to an old fellow in a wig and twelve respectable tradesmen, do you? What can they know whether I am guilty or not—or of *what* I am guilty, either? That's my affair. What does the Bible say? 'Driven off the face of the earth.' Very well. I am off the face of the earth now. As I came at night so I shall go."

"Impossible!" I murmured. "You can't."

"Can't? . . . Not naked like a soul on the Day of Judgment. I shall freeze on to this sleeping-suit. The Last Day is not yet—and . . . you have understood thoroughly. Didn't you?"

I felt suddenly ashamed of myself. I may say truly that I understood—and my hesitation in letting that man swim away from my ship's side had been a mere sham sentiment, a sort of cowardice.

"It can't be done now till next night," I breathed out. "The ship is on the off-shore tack and the wind may fail us."

"As long as I know that you understand," he whispered. "But of course you do. It's a great satisfaction to have got somebody to understand. You seem to have been there on purpose." And in the same whisper, as if we two whenever we talked had to say things to each

other which were not fit for the world to hear, he added, "It's very wonderful."

We remained side by side talking in our secret way—but sometimes silent or just exchanging a whispered word or two at long intervals. And as usual he stared through the port. A breath of wind came now and again into our faces. The ship might have been moored in dock, so gently and on an even keel she slipped through the water, that did not murmur even at our passage, shadowy and silent like a phantom sea.

At midnight I went on deck, and to my mate's great surprise put the ship round on the other tack. His terrible whiskers flitted round me in silent criticism. I certainly should not have done it if it had been only a question of getting out of that sleepy gulf as quickly as possible. I believe he told the second mate, who relieved him, that it was a great want of judgment. The other only yawned. That intolerable cub shuffled about so sleepily and lolled against the rails in such a slack, improper fashion that I came down on him sharply.

"Aren't you properly awake yet?"

"Yes, sir! I am awake."

"Well, then, be good enough to hold yourself as if you were. And keep a look-out. If there's any current we'll be closing with some islands before daylight."

The east side of the gulf is fringed with islands, some solitary, others in groups. On the blue background of the high coast they seem to float on silvery patches of calm water, arid and grey, or dark green and rounded like clumps of evergreen bushes, with the larger ones, a mile or two long, showing the outlines or ridges, ribs of grey rock under the dank mantle of matted leafage. Unknown to trade, to travel, almost to geography, the manner of life they harbour is an unsolved secret. There must be villages—settlements of fishermen at least—on the largest of them, and some communication with the world is probably kept up by native craft. But all that forenoon, as we headed for them, fanned along by the faintest of breezes, I saw no sign of man or canoe in the field of the telescope I kept on pointing at the scattered group.

At noon I gave no orders for a change of course, and the mate's whiskers became much concerned and seemed to be offering themselves unduly to my notice. At last I said:

"I am going to stand right in. Quite in—as far as I can take her."

The stare of extreme surprise imparted an air of ferocity also to his eyes, and he looked truly terrific for a moment.

"We're not doing well in the middle of the gulf," I continued, casually. "I am going to look for the land breezes tonight."

"Bless my soul! Do you mean, sir, in the dark amongst the lot of all them islands and reefs and shoals?"

"Well—if there are any regular land breezes at all on this coast one must get close inshore to find them, mustn't one?"

"Bless my soul!" he exclaimed again under his breath. All that afternoon he wore a dreamy, contemplative appearance which in him was a mark of perplexity. After dinner I went into my stateroom as if I meant to take some rest. There we two bent our dark heads over a half-unrolled chart lying on my bed.

"There," I said. "It's got to be Koh-ring. I've been looking at it ever since sunrise. It has got two hills and a low point. It must be inhabited. And on the coast opposite there is what looks like the mouth of a biggish river—with some town, no doubt, not far up. It's the best chance for you that I can see."

"Anything. Koh-ring let it be."

He looked thoughtfully at the chart as if surveying chances and distances from a lofty height—and following with his eyes his own figure wandering on the blank land of Cochin-China, and then passing off that piece of paper clean out of sight into uncharted regions. And it was as if the ship had two captains to plan her course for her. I had been so worried and restless running up and down that I had not had the patience to dress that day. I had remained in my sleeping-suit, with straw slippers and a soft floppy hat. The closeness of the heat in the gulf had been most oppressive, and the crew were used to see me wandering in that airy attire.

"She will clear the south point as she heads now," I whispered into his ear. "Goodness only knows when, though, but certainly after dark. I'll edge her in to half a mile, as far as I may be able to judge in the dark—"

"Be careful," he murmured, warningly—and I realised suddenly that all my future, the only future for which I was fit, would perhaps go irretrievably to pieces in any mishap to my first command.

I could not stop a moment longer in the room. I motioned him to get out of sight and made my way on the poop. That unplayful cub

had the watch. I walked up and down for a while thinking things out, then beckoned him over.

"Send a couple of hands to open the two quarter-deck ports," I said, mildly.

He actually had the impudence, or else so forgot himself in his wonder at such an incomprehensible order, as to repeat:

"Open the quarter-deck ports! What for, sir?"

"The only reason you need concern yourself about is because I tell you to do so. Have them open wide and fastened properly."

He reddened and went off, but I believe made some jeering remark to the carpenter as to the sensible practice of ventilating a ship's quarter-deck. I know he popped into the mate's cabin to impart the fact to him because the whiskers came on deck, as it were by chance, and stole glances at me from below—for signs of lunacy or drunkenness, I suppose.

A little before supper, feeling more restless than ever, I rejoined, for a moment, my second self. And to find him sitting so quietly was surprising, like something against nature, inhuman.

I developed my plan in a hurried whisper.

"I shall stand in as close as I dare and then put her round. I will presently find means to smuggle you out of here into the sail-locker, which communicates with the lobby. But there is an opening, a sort of square for hauling the sails out, which gives straight on the quarter-deck and which is never closed in fine weather, so as to give air to the sails. When the ship's way is deadened in stays and all the hands are aft at the main-braces you will have a clear road to slip out and get overboard through the open quarter-deck port. I've had them both fastened up. Use a rope's end to lower yourself into the water so as to avoid a splash—you know. It could be heard and cause some beastly complication."

He kept silent for a while, then whispered, "I understand."

"I won't be there to see you go," I began with an effort. "The rest . . . I only hope I have understood, too."

"You have. From first to last"—and for the first time there seemed to be a faltering, something strained in his whisper. He caught hold of my arm, but the ringing of the supper bell made me start. He didn't, though; he only released his grip.

After supper I didn't come below again till well past eight o'clock.

The faint, steady breeze was loaded with dew; and the wet, darkened sails held all there was of propelling power in it. The night, clear and starry, sparkled darkly, and the opaque, lightless patches shifting slowly against the low stars were the drifting islets. On the port bow there was a big one more distant, and shadowily imposing by the great space of sky it eclipsed.

On opening the door I had a back view of my very own self looking at a chart. He had come out of the recess and was standing near the table.

"Quite dark enough," I whispered.

He stepped back and leaned against my bed with a level, quiet glance. I sat on the couch. We had nothing to say to each other. Over our heads the officer of the watch moved here and there. Then I heard him move quickly. I knew what that meant. He was making for the companion; and presently his voice was outside my door.

"We are drawing in pretty fast, sir. Land looks rather close."

"Very well," I answered. "I am coming on deck directly."

I waited till he was gone out of the cuddy, then rose. My double moved too. The time had come to exchange our last whispers, for neither of us was ever to hear each other's natural voice.

"Look here!" I opened a drawer and took out three sovereigns. "Take this anyhow. I've got six and I'd give you the lot, only I must keep a little money to buy some fruit and vegetables for the crew from native boats as we go through Sunda Straits."

He shook his head.

"Take it," I urged him, whispering desperately. "No one can tell what—"

He smiled and slapped meaningly the only pocket of the sleeping-jacket. It was not safe, certainly. But I produced a large old silk handkerchief of mine, and tying the three pieces of gold in a corner, pressed it on him. He was touched, I suppose, because he took it at last and tied it quickly round his waist under the jacket, on his bare skin.

Our eyes met; several seconds elapsed, till, our glances still mingled, I extended my hand and turned the lamp out. Then I passed through the cuddy, leaving the door of my room wide open. . . . "Steward!"

He was still lingering in the pantry in the greatness of his zeal, giving a rub-up to a plated cruet stand the last thing before going to bed. Being careful not to wake up the mate, whose room was opposite, I spoke in an undertone.

He looked round anxiously. "Sir!"

"Can you get me a little hot water from the galley?"

"I am afraid, sir, the galley fire's been out for some time now."

"Go and see."

He flew up the stairs.

"Now," I whispered, loudly, into the saloon—too loudly, perhaps, but I was afraid I couldn't make a sound. He was by my side in an instant—the double captain slipped past the stairs—through a tiny dark passage . . . a sliding door. We were in the sail-locker, scrambling on our knees over the sails. A sudden thought struck me. I saw myself wandering barefooted, bareheaded, the sun beating on my dark poll. I snatched off my floppy hat and tried hurriedly in the dark to ram it on my other self. He dodged and fended off silently. I wonder what he thought had come to me before he understood and suddenly desisted. Our hands met gropingly, lingered united in a steady, motionless clasp for a second. . . . No word was breathed by either of us when they separated.

I was standing quietly by the pantry door when the steward returned.

"Sorry, sir. Kettle barely warm. Shall I light the spirit-lamp?"

"Never mind."

I came out on deck slowly. It was now a matter of conscience to shave the land as close as possible—for now he must go overboard whenever the ship was put in stays. Must! There could be no going back for him. After a moment I walked over to leeward and my heart flew into my mouth at the nearness of the land on the bow. Under any other circumstances I would not have held on a minute longer. The second mate had followed me anxiously.

I looked on till I felt I could command my voice.

"She may weather," I said then in a quiet tone.

"Are you going to try that, sir?" he stammered out incredulously.

I took no notice of him and raised my tone just enough to be heard by the helmsman.

"Keep her good full."

"Good full, sir."

The wind fanned my cheek, the sails slept, the world was silent. The strain of watching the dark loom of the land grow bigger and denser was too much for me. I had shut my eyes—because the ship

must go closer. She must! The stillness was intolerable. Were we standing still?

When I opened my eyes the second view started my heart with a thump. The black southern hill of Koh-ring seemed to hang right over the ship like a towering fragment of the everlasting night. On that enormous mass of blackness there was not a gleam to be seen, not a sound to be heard. It was gliding irresistibly towards us and yet seemed already within reach of the hand. I saw the vague figures of the watch grouped in the waist, gazing in awed silence.

"Are you going on, sir?" inquired an unsteady voice at my elbow.

I ignored it. I had to go on.

"Keep her full. Don't check her way. That won't do now," I said, warningly.

"I can't see the sails very well," the helmsman answered me, in strange, quavering tones.

Was she close enough? Already she was, I won't say in the shadow of the land, but in the very blackness of it, already swallowed up as it were, gone too close to be recalled, gone from me altogether.

"Give the mate a call," I said to the young man who stood at my elbow as still as death. "And turn all hands up."

My tone had a borrowed loudness reverberated from the height of the land. Several voices cried out together: "We are all on deck, sir."

Then stillness again, with the great shadow gliding closer, towering higher, without light, without a sound. Such a hush had fallen on the ship that she might have been a bark of the dead floating in slowly under the very gate of Erebus.

"My God! Where are we?"

It was the mate moaning at my elbow. He was thunderstruck, and as it were deprived of the moral support of his whiskers. He clapped his hands and absolutely cried out, "Lost!"

"Be quiet," I said, sternly.

He lowered his tone, but I saw the shadowy gesture of his despair. "What are we doing here?"

"Looking for the land wind."

He made as if to tear his hair, and addressed me recklessly.

"She will never get out. You have done it, sir. I knew it'd end in something like this. She will never weather, and you are too close now to stay. She'll drift ashore before she's round. O my God!"

I caught his arm as he was raising it to batter his poor devoted head, and shook it violently.

"She's ashore already," he wailed, trying to tear himself away.

"Is she? . . . Keep good full there!"

"Good full, sir," cried the helmsman in a frightened, thin, child-like voice.

I hadn't let go the mate's arm and went on shaking it. "Ready about, do you hear? You go forward"—shake—"and stop there"—shake—"and hold your noise"—shake—"and see these head-sheets properly overhauled"—shake, shake—shake.

And all the time I dared not look toward the land lest my heart should fail me. I released my grip at last and he ran forward as if fleeing for dear life.

I wondered what my double there in the sail-locker thought of this commotion. He was able to hear everything—and perhaps he was able to understand why, on my conscience, it had to be thus close—no less. My first order "Hard alee!" re-echoed ominously under the towering shadow of Koh-ring as if I had shouted in a mountain gorge. And then I watched the land intently. In that smooth water and light wind it was impossible to feel the ship coming-to. No! I could not feel her. And my second self was making now ready to slip out and lower himself overboard. Perhaps he was gone already . . . ?

The great black mass brooding over our very mastheads began to pivot away from the ship's side silently. And now I forgot the secret stranger ready to depart, and remembered only that I was a total stranger to the ship. I did not know her. Would she do it? How was she to be handled?

I swung the mainyard and waited helplessly. She was perhaps stopped, and her very fate hung in the balance, with the black mass of Koh-ring like the gate of the everlasting night towering over her taff-rail. What would she do now? Had she way on her yet? I stepped to the side swiftly, and on the shadowy water I could see nothing except a faint phosphorescent flash revealing the glassy smoothness of the sleeping surface. It was impossible to tell—and I had not learned yet the feel of my ship. Was she moving? What I needed was something easily seen, a piece of paper, which I could throw overboard and watch. I had nothing on me. To run down for it I didn't dare. There was no time. All at once my strained, yearning stare distinguished a white

object floating within a yard of the ship's side. White on the black water. A phosphorescent flash passed under it. What was that thing? . . . I recognised my own floppy hat. It must have fallen off his head . . . and he didn't bother. Now I had what I wanted—the saving mark for my eyes. But I hardly thought of my other self, now gone from the ship, to be hidden for ever from all friendly faces, to be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth, with no brand of the curse on his sane forehead to stay a slaying hand . . . too proud to explain.

And I watched the hat—the expression of my sudden pity for his mere flesh. It had been meant to save his homeless head from the dangers of the sun. And now—behold—it was saving the ship, by serving me for a mark to help out the ignorance of my strangeness. Ha! It was drifting forward, warning me just in time that the ship had gathered sternway.

"Shift the helm," I said in a low voice to the seaman standing still like a statue.

The man's eyes glistened wildly in the binnacle light as he jumped round to the other side and spun round the wheel.

I walked to the break of the poop. On the over-shadowed deck all hands stood by the forebraces waiting for my order. The stars ahead seemed to be gliding from right to left. And all was so still in the world that I heard the quiet remark "She's round," passed in a tone of intense relief between two seamen.

"Let go and haul."

The foreyards ran round with a great noise, amidst cheery cries. And now the frightful whiskers made themselves heard giving various orders. Already the ship was drawing ahead. And I was alone with her. Nothing! no one in the world should stand now between us, throwing a shadow on the way of silent knowledge and mute affection, the perfect communion of a seaman with his first command.

Walking to the taffrail, I was in time to make out, on the very edge of a darkness thrown by a towering black mass like the very gateway of Erebus—yes, I was in time to catch an evanescent glimpse of my white hat left behind to mark the spot where the secret sharer of my cabin and of my thoughts, as though he were my second self, had lowered himself into the water to take his punishment: a free man, a proud swimmer striking out for a new destiny.

How Brigadier Gerard Won His Medal

BY A. CONAN DOYLE

(*1859-1930*)

The Duke of Tarentum, or McDonald, as his old comrades prefer to call him, was, as I could perceive, in the vilest of tempers. His grim Scotch face was like one of those grotesque door-knockers which one sees in the Faubourg St. Germain. We heard afterwards that the Emperor had said in jest that he would have sent him against Wellington in the South, but that he was afraid to trust him within the sound of the pipes. Major Charpentier and I could plainly see that he was smouldering with anger.

"Brigadier Gerard of the Hussars," said he, with the air of the corporal with the recruit.

I saluted.

"Major Charpentier of the Horse Grenadiers."

My companion answered to his name.

"The Emperor has a mission for you."

Without more ado he flung open the door and announced us.

I have seen Napoleon ten times on horseback to once on foot, and I think that he does wisely to show himself to the troops in this fashion, for he cuts a very good figure in the saddle. As we saw him now he was the shortest man out of six by a good hand's breadth, and yet I am no very big man myself, though I ride quite heavy enough for a hussar. It is evident, too, that his body is too long for his legs. With his big, round head, his curved shoulders, and his clean-shaven face, he is more like a Professor at the Sorbonne than the first soldier in France. Every man to his taste, but it seems to me that, if I could clap a pair of fine light cavalry whiskers, like my own, on to him, it would do him no harm. He has a firm mouth, however, and his eyes

are remarkable. I have seen them once turned on me in anger, and I had rather ride at a square on a spent horse than face them again. I am not a man who is easily daunted, either.

He was standing at the side of the room, away from the window, looking up at a great map of the country which was hung upon the wall. Berthier stood beside him, trying to look wise, and just as we entered, Napoleon snatched his sword impatiently from him and pointed with it on the map. He was talking fast and low, but I heard him say, "The valley of the Meuse," and twice he repeated "Berlin." As we entered, his aide-de-camp advanced to us, but the Emperor stopped him and beckoned us to his side.

"You have not yet received the cross of honour, Brigadier Gerard?" he asked.

I replied that I had not, and was about to add that it was not for want of having deserved it, when he cut me short in his decided fashion.

"And you, Major?" he asked.

"No, sire."

"Then you shall both have your opportunity now."

He led us to the great map upon the wall and placed the tip of Berthier's sword on Rheims.

"I will be frank with you, gentlemen, as with two comrades. You have both been with me since Marengo, I believe?" He had a strangely pleasant smile, which used to light up his pale face with a kind of cold sunshine. "Here at Rheims are our present headquarters on this the 14th of March. Very good. Here is Paris, distant by road a good twenty-five leagues. Blucher lies to the north, Schwarzenberg to the south." He prodded at the map with the sword as he spoke.

"Now," said he, "the further into the country these people march, the more completely I shall crush them. They are about to advance upon Paris. Very good. Let them do so. My brother, the King of Spain, will be there with a hundred thousand men. It is to him that I send you. You will hand him this letter, a copy of which I confide to each of you. It is to tell him that I am coming at once, in two day's time, with every man and horse and gun to his relief. I must give them forty-eight hours to recover. Then straight to Paris! You understand me, gentlemen?"

Ah, if I could tell you the glow of pride which it gave me to be

taken into the great man's confidence in this way. As he handed our letters to us I clinked my spurs and threw out my chest, smiling and nodding to let him know that I saw what he would be after. He smiled also, and rested his hand for a moment upon the cape of my dolman. I would have given half my arrears of pay if my mother could have seen me at that instant.

"I will show you your route," said he, turning back to the map. "Your orders are to ride together as far as Bazoches. You will then separate, the one making for Paris by Oulchy and Neuilly, and the other to the north by Braine, Soissons, and Senlis. Have you anything to say, Brigadier Gerard?"

I am a rough soldier, but I have words and ideas. I had begun to speak about glory and the peril of France when he cut me short.

"And you, Major Charpentier?"

"If we find our route unsafe, are we at liberty to choose another?" said he.

"Soldiers do not choose, they obey." He inclined his head to show that we were dismissed, and turned round to Berthier. I do not know what he said, but I heard them both laughing.

Well, as you may think, we lost little time in getting upon our way. In half an hour we were riding down the High Street of Rheims, and it struck twelve o'clock as we passed the cathedral. I had my little grey mare, Violette, the one which Sebastiani had wished to buy after Dresden. It is the fastest horse in the six brigades of light cavalry, and was only beaten by the Duke of Rovigo's racer from England. As to Charpentier, he had the kind of horse which a horse grenadier or a cuirassier would be likely to ride: a back like a bedstead, you understand, and legs like the posts. He is a hulking fellow himself, so that they looked a singular pair. And yet in his insane conceit he ogled the girls as they waved their handkerchiefs to me from the windows, and he twirled his ugly red moustache up into his eyes, just as if it were to him that their attention was addressed.

When we came out of the town we passed through the French camp, and then across the battle-field of yesterday, which was still covered both by our own poor fellows and by the Russians. But of the two the camp was the sadder sight. Our army was thawing away. The Guards were all right, though the young guard was full of conscripts. The artillery and the heavy cavalry were also good if there were more

of them, but the infantry privates with their under-officers looked like schoolboys with their masters. And we had no reserves. When one considered that there were 80,000 Prussians to the north and 150,000 Russians and Austrians to the south, it might make even the bravest man grave.

For my own part, I confess that I shed a tear until the thought came that the Emperor was still with us, and that on that very morning he had placed his hand upon my dolman and had promised me a medal of honour. This set me singing, and I spurred Violette on, until Charpentier had to beg me to have mercy on his great, snorting, panting camel. The road was beaten into paste and rutted two feet deep by the artillery, so that he was right in saying that it was not the place for a gallop.

I have never been very friendly with this Charpentier; and now for twenty miles of the way I could not draw a word from him. He rode with his brows puckered and his chin upon his breast, like a man who is heavy with thought. More than once I asked him what was on his mind, thinking that, perhaps, with my quicker intelligence I might set the matter straight. His answer always was that it was his mission of which he was thinking, which surprised me, because, although I had never thought much of his intelligence, still it seemed to me to be impossible that anyone could be puzzled by so simple and soldierly a task.

Well, we came at last to Bazoches, where he was to take the southern road and I the northern. He half turned in his saddle before he left me, and he looked at me with a singular expression of inquiry in his face.

"What do you make of it, Brigadier?" he asked.

"Of what?"

"Of our mission."

"Surely it is plain enough."

"You think so? Why should the Emperor tell us his plans?"

"Because he recognised our intelligence."

My companion laughed in a manner I found annoying.

"May I ask what you intend to do if you find these villages full of Prussians?" he asked.

"I shall obey my orders."

"But you will be killed."

"Very possibly."

He laughed again, and so offensively that I clapped my hand to my sword. But before I could tell him what I thought of his stupidity and rudeness he had wheeled his horse, and was lumbering away down the other road. I saw his big fur cap vanish over the brow of the hill, and then I rode upon my way, wondering at his conduct. From time to time I put my hand to the breast of my tunic and felt the paper crackle beneath my fingers. Ah, my precious paper, which should be turned into the little silver medal for which I had yearned so long. All the way from Braine to Sermoise I was thinking of what my mother would say when she saw it.

I stopped to give Violette a meal at a wayside auberge on the side of a hill not far from Soissons—a place surrounded by old oaks, and with so many crows that one could scarce hear one's own voice. It was from the innkeeper that I learned that Marmont had fallen back two days before, and that the Prussians were over the Aisne. An hour later, in the fading light, I saw two of their vedettes upon the hill to the right, and then, as darkness gathered, the heavens to the north were all glimmering from the lights of a bivouac.

When I heard that Blucher had been there for two days, I was much surprised that the Emperor should not have known that the country through which he had ordered me to carry my precious letter was already occupied by the enemy. Still, I thought of the tone of his voice when he said to Charpentier that a soldier must not choose, but must obey. I should follow the route he had laid down for me as long as Violette could move a hoof or I a finger upon her bridle. All the way from Sermoise to Soissons, where the road dips up and down, curving among fir-woods, I kept my pistol ready and my sword-belt braced, pushing on swiftly where the path was straight, and then coming slowly round the corners in the way we learned in Spain.

When I came to the farmhouse which lies to the right of the road just after you cross the wooden bridge over the Crise, near where the great statue of the Virgin stands, a woman cried to me from the field saying that the Prussians were in Soissons. A small party of their lancers, she said, had come in that very afternoon, and a whole division was expected before midnight. I did not wait to hear the end of her tale, but clapped spurs into Violette, and in five minutes was galloping her into the town.

Three Uhlans were at the mouth of the main street, their horses tethered, and they gossiping together, each with a pipe as long as my sabre. I saw them well in the light of an open door, but of me they could have seen only the flash of Violette's grey side and the black flutter of my cloak. A moment later I flew through a stream of them rushing from an open gateway. Violette's shoulder sent one of them reeling, and I stabbed at another but missed him. Pang, pang, went two carbines, but I had flown round the curve of the street and never so much as heard the hiss of the balls. Ah, we were great, both Violette and I. She lay down to it like a coursed hare, the fire flying from her hoofs. I stood in my stirrups and brandished my sword. Someone sprang for my bridle. I sliced him through the arm, and I heard him howling behind me. Two horsemen closed upon me. I cut one down and outpaced the other. A minute later I was clear of the town and flying down a broad white road with the black poplars on either side. For a time I heard the rattle of hoofs behind me, but they died and died until I could not tell them from the throbbing of my own heart. Soon I pulled up and listened, but all was silent. They had given up the chase.

Well, the first thing that I did was to dismount and to lead my mare into a small wood through which a stream ran. There I watered her and rubbed her down, giving her two pieces of sugar soaked in cognac from my flask. She was spent from the sharp chase, but it was wonderful to see how she came round with a half-hour's rest. When my thighs closed upon her again, I could tell by the spring and the swing of her that it would not be her fault if I did not win my way safe to Paris.

I must have been well within the enemy's lines now, for I heard a number of them shouting one of their rough drinking songs out of a house by the roadside, and I went round by the fields to avoid it. At another time two men came out into the moonlight (for by this time it was a cloudless night) and shouted something in German; but I galloped on without heeding them, and they were afraid to fire, for their own hussars are dressed exactly as I was. It is best to take no notice at these times, and then they put you down as a deaf man.

It was a lovely moon, and every tree threw a black bar across the road. I could see the countryside just as if it were daytime, and very peaceful it looked, save that there was a great fire raging somewhere in

the north. In the silence of the night-time, and with the knowledge that danger was in front and behind me, the sight of that great distant fire was very striking and awesome. But I am not easily clouded, for I have seen too many singular things, so I hummed a tune between my teeth and thought of little Lisette, whom I might see in Paris. My mind was full of her when, trotting round a corner, I came straight upon half-a-dozen German dragoons, who were sitting round a brushwood fire by the roadside.

I am an excellent soldier. I do not say this because I am prejudiced in my own favour, but because I really am so. I can weigh every chance in a moment, and decide with as much certainty as though I had brooded for a week. Now I saw like a flash that, come what might, I should be chased, and on a horse which had already done a long twelve leagues. But it was better to be chased onwards than to be chased back. On this moonlit night, with fresh horses behind me, I must take my risk in either case; but if I were to shake them off, I preferred that it should be near Senlis than near Soissons. All this flashed on me as if by instinct, you understand. My eyes had hardly rested on the bearded faces under the brass helmets before my rowels had touched Violette's side, and she off with a rattle like a pas-de-charge. Oh, the shouting and rushing and stamping from behind us! Three of them fired and three swung themselves on to their horses. A bullet rapped on the crupper of my saddle with a noise like a stick on a door. Violette sprang madly forward, and I thought she had been wounded, but it was only a graze above the near fore-fetlock. Ah, the dear little mare, how I loved her when I felt her settle down into that long, easy gallop of hers, her hoofs going like a Spanish girl's castanets. I could not hold myself. I turned on my saddle and shouted and raved, "Vive l'Empereur!" I screamed and laughed at the gust of oaths that came back to me.

But it was not over yet. If she had been fresh she might have gained a mile in five. Now she could only hold her own with a very little over. There was one of them, a young boy of an officer, who was better mounted than the others. He drew ahead with every stride. Two hundred yards behind him were two troopers, but I saw every time that I glanced round, that the distance between them was increasing. The other three who had waited to shoot were a long way in the rear. The officer's mount was a bay, a fine horse, though not to be spoken of with

Violette. Yet it was a powerful brute, and it seemed to me that in a few miles its freshness might tell. I waited until the lad was a long way in front of his comrades, and then I eased my mare down a little —a very, very little, so that he might think he was really catching me. When he came within pistol shot of me I drew and cocked my own pistol, and laid my chin upon my shoulder to see what he would do. He did not offer to fire, and I soon discerned the cause. The silly boy had taken his pistols from his holsters when he had camped for the night. He wagged his sword at me now and roared some threat or other. He did not seem to understand that he was at my mercy. I eased Violette down until there was not the length of a long lance between the grey tail and the bay muzzle.

"Rendez-vous!" he yelled.

"I must compliment monsieur upon his French," said I, resting the barrel of my pistol upon my bridle arm, which I have always found best when shooting from the saddle. I aimed at his face, and could see, even in the moonlight, how white he grew when he understood that it was all up with him. But even as my finger pressed the trigger I thought of his mother, and I put my ball through his horse's shoulder. I fear he hurt himself in the fall, for it was a fearful crash, but I had my letter to think of, so I stretched the mare into a gallop once more.

But they were not so easily shaken off, these brigands. The two troopers thought no more of their young officer than if he had been a recruit thrown in the riding-school. They left him to the others and thundered on after me. I had pulled up on the brow of a hill, thinking that I had heard the last of them; but, my faith, I soon saw there was no time for loitering, so away we went, the mare tossing her head and I my busby, to show what we thought of two dragoons who tried to catch a hussar. But at this moment, even while I laughed at the thought, my heart stood still within me, for there at the end of the long white road was a black patch of cavalry waiting to receive me. To a young soldier it might have seemed the shadow of the trees, but to me it was a troop of hussars, and, turn where I could, death seemed to be waiting for me.

Well, I had the dragoons behind me and the hussars in front. Never since Moscow have I seemed to be in such peril. But for the honour of the brigade I had rather be cut down by a light cavalryman than by a heavy. I never drew bridle, therefore, or hesitated for an instant, but

I let Violette have her head. I remember that I tried to pray as I rode, but I am a little out of practice at such things, and the only words I could remember were the prayer for fine weather which we used at the school on the evening before holidays. Even this seemed better than nothing, and I was pattering it out, when suddenly I heard French voices in front of me. Ah, mon Dieu, but the joy went through my heart like a musket-ball. They were ours—our own dear little rascals from the corps of Marmont. Round whisked my two dragoons and galloped for their lives, with the moon gleaming on their brass helmets, while I trotted up to my friends with no undue haste, for I would have them understand that though a hussar may fly, it is not in his nature to fly very fast. Yet I fear that Violette's heaving flanks and foam-spattered muzzle gave the lie to my careless bearing.

Who should be at the head of the troop but old Bouvet, whom I saved at Leipzig! When he saw me his little pink eyes filled with tears, and, indeed, I could not but shed a few myself at the sight of his joy. I told him of my mission, but he laughed when I said that I must pass through Senlis.

"The enemy is there," said he, "you cannot go."

"I prefer to go where the enemy is," I answered.

"But why not go straight to Paris with your despatch? Why should you choose to pass through the one place where you are almost sure to be taken or killed?"

"A soldier does not choose—he obeys," said I, just as I had heard Napoleon say it.

Old Bouvet laughed in his wheezy way, until I had to give my moustachios a twirl and look him up and down in a manner which brought him to reason.

"Well," said he, "you had best come along with us, for we are all bound for Senlis. Our orders are to reconnoitre the place. A squadron of Poniatowski's Polish lancers are in front of us. If you must ride through it, it is possible that we may be able to go with you."

So away we went, jingling and clanking through the quiet night until we came up with the Poles—fine old soldiers all of them, though a trifle heavy for their horses. It was a treat to see them, for they could not have carried themselves better if they had belonged to my own brigade. We rode together, until in the early morning we saw the lights

of Senlis. A peasant was coming along with a cart, and from him we learned how things were going there.

His information was certain, for his brother was the Mayor's coachman, and he had spoken with him late the night before. There was a single squadron of Cossacks—or a polk, as they call it in their frightful language—quartered upon the Mayor's house which stands at the corner of the market-place, and is the largest building in the town. A whole division of Prussian infantry was encamped in the woods to the north, but only the Cossacks were in Senlis. Ah, what a chance to avenge ourselves upon these barbarians, whose cruelty to our poor country-folk was the talk of every camp fire.

We were into the town like a torrent, hacked down the vedettes, rode over the guard, and were smashing in the doors of the Mayor's house before they understood that there was a Frenchman within twenty miles of them. We saw horrid heads at the windows, heads bearded to the temples, with tangled hair and sheepskin caps, and silly, gaping mouths. "Hourra! Hourra!" they shrieked, and fired with their carbines, but our fellows were into the house and at their throats before they had wiped the sleep out of their eyes. It was dreadful to see how the Poles flung themselves upon them, like starving wolves upon a herd of fat bucks—for, as you know, the Poles have a blood feud against the Cossacks. The most were killed in the upper rooms, whither they had fled for shelter, and the blood was pouring down into the hall like rain from a roof. They are terrible soldiers, these Poles, though I think they are a trifle heavy for their horses. Man for man, they are as big as Kellermann's cuirassiers. Their equipment is, of course, much lighter, since they are without the cuirass, back-plate, and helmet.

Well, it was at this point that I made an error—a very serious error it must be admitted. Up to this moment I had carried out my mission in a manner which only my modesty prevents me from describing as remarkable. But now I did that which an official would condemn and a soldier excuse.

There is no doubt that the mare was spent, but still it is true that I might have galloped on through Senlis and reached the country, where I should have had no enemy between me and Paris. But what hussar can ride past a fight and never draw rein? It is to ask too much of him. Besides, I thought that if Violette had an hour of rest I might have three hours the better at the other end. Then on the top of it

came those heads at the windows, with their sheepskin hats and their barbarous cries. I sprang from my saddle, threw Violette's bridle over a rail-post, and ran into the house with the rest. It is true that I was too late to be of service, and that I was nearly wounded by a lance-thrust from one of these dying savages. Still, it is a pity to miss even the smallest affair, for one never knows what opportunity for advancement may present itself. I have seen more soldierly work in outpost skirmishes and little gallop-and-hack affairs of the kind than in any of the Emperor's big battles.

When the house was cleared I took a bucket of water out for Violette, and our peasant guide showed me where the good Mayor kept his fodder. My faith, but the little sweetheart was ready for it. Then I sponged down her legs, and leaving her still tethered I went back into the house to find a mouthful for myself, so that I should not need to halt again until I was in Paris.

And now I come to the part of my story which may seem singular to you, although I could tell you at least ten things every bit as queer which have happened to me in my lifetime. You can understand that, to a man who spends his life in scouting and vedette duties on the bloody ground which lies between two great armies, there are many chances of strange experiences. I'll tell you, however, exactly what occurred.

Old Bouvet was waiting in the passage when I entered, and he asked me whether we might not crack a bottle of wine together. "My faith, we must not be long," said he. "There are ten thousand of Theilmann's Prussians in the woods up yonder."

"Where is the wine?" I asked.

"Ah, you may trust two hussars to find where the wine is," said he, and taking a candle in his hand, he led the way down the stone stairs into the kitchen.

When we got there we found another door, which opened on to a winding stair with the cellar at the bottom. The Cossacks had been there before us, as was easily seen by the broken bottles littered all over it. However, the Mayor was a *bon-vivant*, and I do not wish to have a better set of bins to pick from. Chambertin, Graves, Alicant, white wine and red, sparkling and still, they lay in pyramids peeping coyly out of the sawdust. Old Bouvet stood with his candle, looking here and there, purring in his throat like a cat before a milk-pail. He

had picked upon a Burgundy at last, and had his hand outstretched to the bottle, when there came a roar of musketry from above us, a rush of feet, and such a yelping and screaming as I have never listened to. The Prussians were upon us.

Bouvet is a brave man; I will say that for him. He flashed out his sword and away he clattered up the stone steps, his spurs clinking as he ran. I followed him, but just as we came out into the kitchen passage a tremendous shout told us that the house had been recaptured.

"It is all over," I cried, grasping at Bouvet's sleeve.

"There is one more to die," he shouted, and away he went like a madman up the second stair. In effect, I should have gone to my death also had I been in his place, for he had done very wrong in not throwing out his scouts to warn him if the Germans advanced upon him. For an instant I was about to rush up with him, and then I bethought myself that, after all, I had my own mission to think of, and that if I were taken the important letter of the Emperor would be sacrificed. I let Bouvet die alone, therefore, and I went down into the cellar again, closing the door behind me.

Well, it was not a very rosy prospect down there either. Bouvet had dropped the candle when the alarm came, and I, pawing about in the darkness, could find nothing but broken bottles. At last I came upon the candle, which had rolled under the curve of a cask, but, try as I would with my tinder-box, I could not light it. The reason was that the wick had been wet in a puddle of wine, so suspecting that this might be the case, I cut the end off with my sword. Then I found that it lighted easily enough. But what to do I could not imagine. The scoundrels upstairs were shouting themselves hoarse, several hundred of them from the sound, and it was clear that some of them would soon want to moisten their throats. There would be an end to a dashing soldier, and of the mission and of the medal. I thought of my mother and I thought of the Emperor. It made me weep to think that the one would lose so excellent a son and the other the best light cavalry officer he ever had since Lasalle's time. But presently I dashed the tears from my eyes. "Courage!" I cried, striking myself upon the chest. "Courage, my brave boy! Is it possible that one who has come safely from Moscow without so much as a frost-bite will die in a French wine-cellar?" At the thought I was up on my feet and clutching at the letter in my tunic, for the crackle of it gave me courage.

My first plan was to set fire to the house, in the hope of escaping in the confusion. My second, to get into an empty wine-cask. I was looking round to see if I could find one, when suddenly, in the corner, I espied a little low door, painted of the same grey colour as the wall, so that it was only a man with quick sight who would have noticed it. I pushed against it, and at first I imagined that it was locked. Presently, however, it gave a little, and then I understood that it was held by the pressure of something on the other side. I put my feet against a hogshead of wine, and I gave such a push that the door flew open and I came down with a crash upon my back, the candle flying out of my hands, so that I found myself in darkness once more. I picked myself up and stared through the black archway into the gloom beyond.

There was a slight ray of light coming from some slit or grating. The dawn had broken outside, and I could dimly see the long curving sides of several huge casks, which made me think that perhaps this was where the Mayor kept his reserves of wine while they were maturing. At any rate, it seemed to be a safer hiding-place than the outer cellar, so gathering up my candle, I was just closing the door behind me, when I suddenly saw something which filled me with amazement, and even, I confess, with the smallest little touch of fear.

I have said that at the further end of the cellar there was a dim grey fan of light striking downwards from somewhere near the roof. Well, as I peered through the darkness, I suddenly saw a great, tall man skip into this belt of daylight, and then out again into the darkness at the further end. My word, I gave such a start that my busby nearly broke its chin-strap! It was only a glance, but, none the less, I had time to see that the fellow had a hairy Cossack cap on his head, and that he was a great, long-legged, broad-shouldered brigand, with a sabre at his waist. My faith, even Etienne Gerard was a little staggered at being left alone with such a creature in the dark.

But only for a moment. "Courage!" I thought. "Am I not a hussar, a brigadier, too, at the age of thirty-one, and the chosen messenger of the Emperor?" After all, this skulker had more cause to be afraid of me than I of him. And then suddenly I understood that he was afraid—horribly afraid. I could read it from his quick step and his bent shoulders as he ran among the barrels, like a rat making for its hole. And, of course, it must have been he who had held the door against me, and not some packing-case or wine-cask as I had imagined.

He was the pursued and I the pursuer. Aha, I felt my whiskers bristle as I advanced upon him through the darkness! He would find that he had no chicken to deal with, this robber from the North. For the moment I was magnificent.

At first I had feared to light my candle lest I should make a mark of myself, but now, after cracking my shin over a box, and catching my spurs in some canvas, I thought the bolder course the wiser. I lit it therefore, and then I advanced with long strides, my sword in my hand. "Come out, you rascal!" I cried. "Nothing can save you. You will at last meet with your deserts."

I held my candle high, and presently I caught a glimpse of a man's head staring at me over a barrel. He had a gold chevron on his black cap, and the expression of his face told me in an instant that he was an officer and a man of refinement.

"Monsieur," he cried, in excellent French, "I surrender myself on a promise of quarter. But if I do not have your promise, I will then sell my life as dearly as I can."

"Sir," said I, "a Frenchman knows how to treat an unfortunate enemy. Your life is safe." With that he handed his sword over the top of the barrel, and I bowed with the candle on my heart. "Whom have I the honour of capturing?" I asked.

"I am the Count Boutkine, of the Emperor's own Don Cossacks," said he. "I came out with my troop to reconnoitre Senlis, and as we found no sign of your people we determined to spend the night here."

"And would it be an indiscretion," I asked, "if I were to inquire how you came into the back cellar?"

"Nothing more simple," said he. "It was our intention to start at early dawn. Feeling chilled after dressing, I thought that a cup of wine would do me no harm, so I came down to see what I could find. As I was rummaging about, the house was suddenly carried by assault so rapidly that by the time I had climbed the stairs it was all over. It only remained for me to save myself, so I came down here and hid myself in the back cellar, where you have found me."

I thought of how old Bouvet had behaved under the same conditions, and the tears sprang to my eyes as I contemplated the glory of France. Then I had to consider what I should do next. It was clear that this Russian Count, being in the back cellar while we were in the front one, had not heard the sounds which would have told him that the

house was once again in the hands of his own allies. If he should once understand this the tables would be turned, and I should be his prisoner instead of he being mine. What was I to do? I was at my wits' end, when suddenly there came to me an idea so brilliant that I could not but be amazed at my own invention.

"Count Boutkine," said I, "I find myself in a most difficult position."

"And why?" he asked.

"Because I have promised you your life."

His jaw dropped a little.

"You would not withdraw your promise?" he cried.

"If the worst comes to the worst I can die in your defence," said I; "but the difficulties are great."

"What is it, then?" he asked.

"I will be frank with you," said I. "You must know that our fellows, and especially the Poles, are so incensed against the Cossacks that the mere sight of the uniform drives them mad. They precipitate themselves instantly upon the wearer and tear him limb from limb. Even their officers cannot restrain them."

The Russian grew pale at my words and the way in which I said them.

"But this is terrible," said he.

"Horrible!" said I. "If we were to go up together at this moment I cannot promise how far I could protect you."

"I am in your hands," he cried. "What would you suggest that we should do? Would it not be best that I should remain here?"

"That worst of all."

"And why?"

"Because our fellows will ransack the house presently, and then you would be cut to pieces. No, no, I must go up and break it to them. But even then, when once they see that accursed uniform, I do not know what may happen."

"Should I then take the uniform off?"

"Excellent!" I cried. "Hold, we have it! You will take your uniform off and put on mine. That will make you sacred to every French soldier."

"It is not the French I fear so much as the Poles."

"But my uniform will be a safeguard against either."

"How can I thank you?" he cried. "But you—what are you to wear?"

"I will wear yours."

"And perhaps fall a victim to your generosity?"

"It is my duty to take the risk," I answered, "but I have no fears. I will ascend in your uniform. A hundred swords will be turned upon me. 'Hold!' I will shout, 'I am the Brigadier Gerard!' Then they will see my face. They will know me. And I will tell them about you. Under the shield of these clothes you will be sacred."

His fingers trembled with eagerness as he tore off his tunic. His boots and breeches were much like my own, so there was no need to change them, but I gave him my hussar jacket, my dolman, my busby, my sword-belt, and my sabre-tasche, while I took in exchange his high sheepskin cap with the gold chevron, his fur-trimmed coat, and his crooked sword. Be it well understood that in changing the tunics I did not forget to change my thrice-precious letter also from my old one to my new.

"With your leave," said I, "I shall now bind you to a barrel."

He made a great fuss over this, but I have learned in my soldiering never to throw away chances, and how could I tell that he might not, when my back was turned, see how the matter really stood and break in upon my plans? He was leaning against a barrel at the time, so I ran six times round it with a rope, and then tied it with a big knot behind. If he wished to come upstairs he would, at least, have to carry a thousand litres of good French wine for a knapsack. I then shut the door of the back cellar behind me, so that he might not hear what was going forward, and tossing the candle away I ascended the kitchen stair.

There were only about twenty steps, and yet, while I came up them, I seemed to have time to think of everything that I had ever hoped to do. It was the same feeling that I had at Eylau when I lay with my broken leg and saw the horse artillery galloping down upon me. Of course, I knew that if I were taken I should be shot instantly as being disguised within the enemy's lines. Still, it was a glorious death—in the direct service of the Emperor—and I reflected that there could not be less than five lines, and perhaps seven, in the *Moniteur* about me. Palaret had eight lines, and I am sure that he had not so fine a career.

When I made my way out into the hall, with all the nonchalance in

my face and manner that I could assume, the very first thing that I saw was Bouvet's dead body, with his legs drawn up and a broken sword in his hand. I could see by the black smudge that he had been shot at close quarters. I should have wished to salute as I went by, for he was a gallant man, but I feared lest I should be seen, and so I passed on.

The front of the hall was full of Prussian infantry, who were knocking loopholes in the wall, as though they expected that there might be yet another attack. Their officer, a little man, was running about giving directions. They were all too busy to take much notice of me, but another officer, who was standing by the door with a long pipe in his mouth, strode across and clapped me on the shoulder, pointing to the dead bodies of our poor hussars, and saying something which was meant for a jest, for his long beard opened and showed every fang in his head. I laughed heartily also, and said the only Russian words that I knew. I learned them from little Sophie, at Wilna, and they meant: "If the night is fine we shall meet under the oak tree, and if it rains we shall meet in the byre." It was all the same to this German, however, and I have no doubt that he gave me credit for saying something very witty indeed, for he roared laughing, and slapped me on my shoulder again. I nodded to him and marched out of the hall-door as coolly as if I were the commandant of the garrison.

There were a hundred horses tethered about outside, most of them belonging to the Poles and hussars. Good little Violette was waiting with the others, and she whinnied when she saw me coming towards her. But I would not mount her. No. I was much too cunning for that. On the contrary, I chose the most shaggy little Cossack horse that I could see, and I sprang upon it with as much assurance as though it had belonged to my father before me. It had a great bag of plunder slung over its neck, and this I laid upon Violette's back, and led her along beside me. Never have you seen such a picture of the Cossack returning from the foray. It was superb.

Well, the town was full of Prussians by this time. They lined the side-walks and pointed me out to each other, saying, as I could judge from their gestures, "There goes one of those devils of Cossacks. They are the boys for foraging and plunder."

One or two officers spoke to me with an air of authority, but I shook my head and smiled, and said, "If the night is fine we shall meet under the oak tree, but if it rains we shall meet in the byre," at which they

shrugged their shoulders and gave the matter up. In this way I worked along until I was beyond the northern outskirt of the town. I could see in the roadway two lancer vedettes with their black and white pennons, and I knew that when I was once past these I should be a free man once more. I made my pony trot, therefore, Violette rubbing her nose against my knee all the time, and looking up at me to ask how she had deserved that this hairy doormat of a creature should be preferred to her. I was not more than a hundred yards from the Uhlans, when suddenly, you can imagine my feelings when I saw a real Cossack coming galloping along the roadway towards me.

Ah, my friend, you who read this, if you have any heart, you will feel for a man like me, who had gone through so many dangers and trials, only at this very last moment to be confronted with one which appeared to put an end to everything. I will confess that for a moment I lost heart, and was inclined to throw myself down in my despair, and to cry out that I had been betrayed. But, no; I was not beaten even now. I opened two buttons of my tunic so that I might get easily at the Emperor's message, for it was my fixed determination when all hope was gone to swallow the letter and then die sword in hand. Then I felt that my little crooked sword was loose in its sheath, and I trotted on to where the vedettes were waiting. They seemed inclined to stop me, but I pointed to the other Cossack, who was still a couple of hundred yards off, and they, understanding that I merely wished to meet him, let me pass with a salute.

I dug my spurs into my pony, then, for if I were only far enough from the lancers I thought I might manage the Cossack without much difficulty. He was an officer, a large, bearded man, with a gold chevron in his cap, just the same as mine. As I advanced he unconsciously aided me by pulling up his horse, so that I had a fine start of the vedettes. On I came for him, and I could see wonder changing to suspicion in his brown eyes as he looked at me and at my pony, and at my equipment. I do not know what it was that was wrong, but he saw something which was as it should not be. He shouted out a question, and then when I gave no answer he pulled out his sword. I was glad in my heart to see him do so, for I had always rather fight than cut down an unsuspecting enemy. Now I made at him full tilt, and, parrying his cut, I got my point in just under the fourth button of his tunic. Down he went, and the weight of him nearly took me off my

horse before I could disengage. I never glanced at him to see if he were living or dead, for I sprang off my pony and on to Violette, with a shake of my bridle and a kiss of my hand to the two Uhlans behind me. They galloped after me, shouting, but Violette had had her rest and was just as fresh as when she started. I took the first side road to the west and then the first to the south, which would take me away from the enemy's country. On we went and on, every stride taking me further from my foes and nearer to my friends. At last, when I reached the end of a long stretch of road, and looking back from it could see no sign of any pursuers, I understood that my troubles were over.

And it gave me a glow of happiness, as I rode, to think that I had done to the letter what the Emperor had ordered. What would he say when he saw me? What could he say which would do justice to the incredible way in which I had risen above every danger? He had ordered me to go through Sermoise, Soissons, and Senlis, little dreaming that they were all three occupied by the enemy. And yet I had done it. I had borne his letter in safety through each of these towns. Hussars, dragoons, lancers, Cossacks, and infantry—I had run the gauntlet of all of them, and had come out unharmed.

When I had got as far as Dammartin I caught a first glimpse of our own outposts. There was a troop of dragoons in a field, and of course I could see from the horsehair crests that they were French. I galloped towards them in order to ask them if all was safe between there and Paris, and as I rode I felt such a pride at having won my way back to friends again, that I could not refrain from waving my sword in the air.

At this a young officer galloped out from among the dragoons, also brandishing his sword, and it warmed my heart to think that he should come riding with such ardour and enthusiasm to greet me. I made Violette caracole, and as we came together I brandished my sword more gallantly than ever, but you can imagine my feelings when he suddenly made a cut at me which would certainly have taken my head off if I had not fallen forward with my nose in Violette's mane. My faith, it whistled just over my cap like an east wind. Of course, it came from this accursed Cossack uniform which, in my excitement, I had forgotten all about, and this young dragoon had imagined that I was some Russian champion who was challenging the French cavalry. My word, he was a frightened man when he understood how near he had been to killing the celebrated Brigadier Gerard.

Well, the road was clear, and about three o'clock in the afternoon I was at St. Denis, though it took me a long two hours to get from there to Paris, for the road was blocked with commissariat waggons and guns of the artillery reserve, which was going north to Marmont and Mortier. You cannot conceive the excitement which my appearance in such a costume made in Paris, and when I came to the Rue de Rivoli I should think I had a quarter of a mile of folk riding or running behind me. Word had got about from the dragoons (two of whom had come with me), and everybody knew about my adventures and how I had come by my uniform. It was a triumph—men shouting and women waving their handkerchiefs and blowing kisses from the windows.

Although I am a man singularly free from conceit, still I must confess that, on this one occasion, I could not restrain myself from showing that this reception gratified me. The Russian's coat had hung very loose upon me, but now I threw out my chest until it was as tight as a sausage-skin. And my little sweetheart of a mare tossed her mane and pawed with her front hoofs, frisking her tail about as though she said, "We've done it together this time. It is to us that commissions should be intrusted." When I kissed her between the nostrils as I dismounted at the gate of the Tuileries there was as much shouting as if a bulletin had been read from the Grand Army.

I was hardly in costume to visit a king; but, after all, if one has a soldierly figure one can do without all that. I was shown up straight away to Joseph, whom I had often seen in Spain. He seemed as stout, as quiet, and as amiable as ever. Talleyrand was in the room with him, or I suppose I should call him the Duke of Benevento, but I confess that I like old names best. He read my letter when Joseph Buonaparte handed it to him, and then he looked at me with the strangest expression in those funny little, twinkling eyes of his.

"Were you the only messenger?" he asked.

"There was one other, sir," said I. "Major Charpentier, of the Horse Grenadiers."

"He has not yet arrived," said the King of Spain.

"If you had seen the legs of his horse, sire, you would not wonder at it," I remarked.

"There may be other reasons," said Talleyrand, and he gave that singular smile of his.

Well, they paid me a compliment or two, though they might have

said a good deal more and yet have said too little. I bowed myself out, and very glad I was to get away, for I hate a court as much as I love a camp. Away I went to my old friend Chaubert, in the Rue Miromesnil, and there I got his hussar uniform, which fitted me very well. He and Lisette and I supped together in his rooms, and all my dangers were forgotten. In the morning I found Violette ready for another twenty-league stretch. It was my intention to return instantly to the Emperor's headquarters, for I was, as you may well imagine, impatient to hear his words of praise, and to receive my reward.

I need not say that I rode back by a safe route, for I had seen quite enough of Uhlans and Cossacks. I passed through Meaux and Château Thierry, and so in the evening I arrived at Rheims, where Napoleon was still lying. The bodies of our fellows and of St. Prest's Russians had all been buried, and I could see changes in the camp also. The soldiers looked better cared for; some of the cavalry had received remounts, and everything was in excellent order. It is wonderful what a good general can effect in a couple of days.

When I came to the headquarters I was shown straight into the Emperor's room. He was drinking coffee at a writing-table, with a big plan drawn out on paper in front of him. Berthier and McDonald were leaning, one over each shoulder, and he was talking so quickly that I don't believe that either of them could catch a half of what he was saying. But when his eyes fell upon me he dropped the pen on to the chart, and he sprang up with a look in his pale face which struck me cold.

"What the deuce are you doing here?" he shouted. When he was angry he had a voice like a peacock.

"I have the honour to report to you, sire," said I, "that I have delivered your despatch safely to the King of Spain."

"What!" he yelled, and his two eyes transfixed me like bayonets. Oh, those dreadful eyes, shifting from grey to blue, like steel in the sunshine. I can see them now when I have a bad dream.

"What has become of Charpentier?" he asked.

"He is captured," said McDonald.

"By whom?"

"The Russians."

"The Cossacks?"

"No, a single Cossack."

"He gave himself up?"

"Without resistance."

"He is an intelligent officer. You will see that the medal of honour is awarded to him."

When I heard those words I had to rub my eyes to make sure that I was awake.

"As to you," cried the Emperor, taking a step forward as if he would have struck me, "you brain of a hare, what do you think that you were sent upon this mission for? Do you conceive that I would send a really important message by such a hand as yours, and through every village which the enemy holds? How you came through them passes my comprehension; but if your fellow messenger had had but as little sense as you, my whole plan of campaign would have been ruined. Can you not see, coglione, that this message contained false news, and that it was intended to deceive the enemy whilst I put a very different scheme into execution?"

When I heard those cruel words and saw the angry, white face which glared at me, I had to hold the back of a chair, for my mind was failing me and my knees would hardly bear me up. But then I took courage as I reflected that I was an honourable gentleman, and that my whole life had been spent in toiling for this man and for my beloved country.

"Sire," said I, and the tears would trickle down my cheeks whilst I spoke, "when you are dealing with a man like me you would find it wiser to deal openly. Had I known that you had wished the despatch to fall into the hands of the enemy, I would have seen that it came there. As I believed that I was to guard it, I was prepared to sacrifice my life for it. I do not believe, sire, that any man in the world ever met with more toils and perils than I have done in trying to carry out what I thought was your will."

I dashed the tears from my eyes as I spoke, and with such fire and spirit as I could command I gave him an account of it all, of my dash through Soissons, my brush with the dragoons, my adventure in Senlis, my rencontre with Count Boutkine in the cellar, my disguise, my meeting with the Cossack officer, my flight, and how at the last moment I was nearly cut down by a French dragoon. The Emperor, Berthier, and McDonald listened with astonishment on their faces. When I had finished Napoleon stepped forward and he pinched me by the ear.

"There, there!" said he. "Forget anything which I may have said. I would have done better to trust you. You may go."

I turned to the door, and my hand was upon the handle, when the Emperor called upon me to stop.

"You will see," said he, turning to the Duke of Tarentum, "that Brigadier Gerard has the special medal of honour, for I believe that if he has the thickest head he has also the stoutest heart in my army."

The *Leopard of the Sea* [1]

BY H. G. DWIGHT

Power over the waters hath Allah given to the unbeliever, but over the land to the faithful.—TURKISH PROVERB.

AFTER it was quite dark, a man who strolled by happened to catch sight of my camera. He stopped and began to examine it. I discreetly lit a cigarette in order to show him that the camera had a proprietor. He continued his inspection, as much as to show me that he had known I was there. Then he took out his tobacco box, rolled a cigarette with deliberation, came up to me, saluted me politely, and lighted his cigarette from mine. It is the custom of the country, you know. Nobody has any matches. I suppose somebody did once, but since then everybody has gone on taking the sacred fire from everybody else.

Having made the second salutation of usage, the stranger showed no haste to be off. Indeed, after standing a moment, he sat down on another stone near me. From that, and from his silence, and from a certain easy awkwardness about him, I guessed he was a Turk.

"Do you make postcards?" he asked at last.

"No," I said, "I am just taking a picture."

"Ah, you have a whim."

"Yes," I assented, "I have a whim." And I smiled to myself in the dark at the pleasant idiom.

"Why do you take pictures now, when it is dark?" pursued my companion. "There is a very pretty view from here in the daytime, but can your machine see it at night?"

I did not mind his inquisitiveness. There was nothing eager or insistent about it. It was simple and natural, and there was a quality in it that I often feel in the Turks, of being able to take the preliminaries of life for granted. The man was evidently not of the higher classes,

[1] From *Stamboul Nights* by H. G. Dwight, copyright 1916 by Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc.

but neither was he of the lowest. I could make out that he wore European clothes and no collar.

"I want to get the lights of Ramazan," I explained to him. "I took one picture at sunset, so as to get the shape of Yeni Jami and the way the Golden Horn lies behind it, and afterward I shall take another on the same plate, for the lights."

"Ah!" he uttered, as if perfectly comprehending my whim. And after a pause he added: "They must make a great feast at Yeni Jami tonight. They have not lighted one lamp yet."

It was true. The minarets of St. Sophia, the Süleïmanieh, all the other great mosques that ride the crest of Stamboul, already wore their necklaces of gold beads, while mysterious pendants began to twinkle between them. We watched one spark after another spell "O Mohammed!" above the dome of St. Sophia, and a golden flower grew out of the dark between the minarets of Baïezid.

"Do you come from afar?" suddenly asked my companion.

"Yes," I said, "from America."

"From America," he repeated. I could see by his tone that the name did not suggest very much to him. "I have been to many countries, but I have not been to America. How many days does it take to go?"

"Eh," I replied, "if you pay very much and go half the way by train you can do it in eight or nine days. If you go all the way by steamer it takes about three weeks."

"Then it is not so far as Yemen," remarked my companion.

"Oh, have you been to Yemen?" I asked in turn. "I have been to many countries too, but I have never been to Yemen."

"I never would have gone if I had known. But now they go most of the way by train."

"Didn't you like the sea?" I ventured.

"Fire is for the brazier and water is for the cup," returned my companion somewhat enigmatically.

A flicker came out against one of the dark lances of Yeni Jami, and then three small lamps—which were glass cups of oil with a floating wick—dropped into place one above another. Presently three more appeared beside them, and three more, until the lower gallery of the minaret was set off with its triple circlet of light. There was an interval, during which one could imagine a turbaned person picking his way up a corkscrew stair of stone, and the second gallery put on

a similar ornament. I was wondering whether the turbaned person would have to climb all the way down to the ground and up into the other minaret, when lights began to flicker there too. But what I really wondered was what my companion meant by his odd proverb.

"Have you been much on the sea?" I asked, hoping to find out.

"Eh, my father was a stoker on the *Leopard of the Sea,* and when I was thirteen or fourteen I went on board too. The captain took a fancy to me, and when I grew up they made me a lieutenant. But we only went outside once: that time we went to Yemen."

"Oh!" I exclaimed, beginning to be interested in my man and resolving to seize him by the leg if he got up from his stone. "What sort of a ship was the *Leopard of the Sea?*"

"Didn't you ever hear of it?" he asked in surprise. I didn't answer and he went on: "She was not a battleship, if that is what you mean. They called her a cruiser. She was an old steamer they bought in Europe. Sometimes she carried soldiers to the Dardanelles, but most of the time she lay in the Golden Horn."

"How did she happen to go to Yemen?"

The experience of a lengthening career has taught me that information may sometimes be obtained by asking for it, and this time my strategy was successful.

"It was an idea of Sultan Hamid. One night, late late, an aide-de-camp from the Palace came on board with an officer in chains, and said that he was to be taken at once to Yemen. Ten minutes later another aide-de-camp came to say good-bye to the officer, from the Sultan, and to give him his promotion as general, and to make him a present of five hundred pounds. They said he was a Circassian prince and that he had been plotting. It was a lie. But Sultan Hamid believed it. And how was he to know that you cannot start for Yemen like that, in ten minutes? It was not his trade. It was ours; but none of us was on board, and we had no coal, and no food, and nothing, and the people from the Palace said we must be gone before morning. So sailors came to wake us up—as many of us as they could find—and there was great calamity. And we did start before morning. We got a tug to pull us, and we went around to Küchük Chekmejeh, in the Marmora, and there we stayed till we were ready to start. It took us three or four weeks. The machine was old and broken, and we had to get an Englishman to mend it. And the *Leopard of the Sea* had been lying so long in the

harbour that no one could find her bottom. It was all grown with bushes and trees, like a garden. And what mussels grew in the garden! and what *pilaf* they made! We picked off all we could, and we ate them ourselves till we were sick of them, and we sold the rest. The mussels of the *Leopard of the Sea* were famous in Constantinople. Afterwards we were sorry we had sold the mussels, though. When at last we started for Yemen each one of us had ten loaves of bread and some olives and cheese. We didn't know how long we would be on the way. At the end of three days we had only just passed the Dardanelles and the cheese and olives were gone. A day or two later the bread was gone too, though we were still far from Yemen."

"How about water?" I asked.

"Water we had, thanks to God! We had a machine for making the water of the sea sweet. It was only food we didn't have. We had to stop at an island and get some."

"What island was it?" pursued I, in curiosity, wondering how far the *Leopard of the Sea* got on ten loaves of bread a man.

"How should I know? It was an island in the White Sea." By which he meant not our White Sea but the Mediterranean. "I didn't ask the name. Greeks lived on it. The governor, of course, was a Turk. We were very sorry when we left it. The sea began to show himself after that. Until then we had not known him."

"Were you sick?"

The darkness hid on my face the grin without which this question may not be asked.

"My soul! Who is not sick when the wind blows on the sea—unless he is accustomed? We were not accustomed. How should we be? We had never put our noses outside the Dardanelles. It was worst for the captain and me, because we had to stay on deck and steer whether we were sick or not. But we got accustomed by and by. And the captain taught me a little about the machine which points its finger at the Great Bear, and about the papers wherein are written all the lands and islands of the earth. And after two or three weeks we found Egypt. It seemed to me a miracle. When I saw it lying white and flat on the edge of the sea and the captain said it was Egypt, I said to myself: 'How do we know that it is Egypt? It may be Persia. It may be England.' But it was Egypt, thanks to God! And if it had not been for the Circassian I don't know what we would have done.

"He was a very good man. The aide-de-camp who brought him from the Palace said that he was to be kept shut up in a small room and that he was to eat nothing but bread and water. But we were all shut up and none of us had anything but bread and water, and not always that. And so the captain very soon let the Circassian do what he liked. And when we got to Egypt the Circassian bought food and coal for us, out of the money the Sultan had given him. For we had none. We had spent all we had at Küchük Chekmejeh and at the island. Then we went on, through the river that goes into the Arabian Sea. We had orders to take the Circassian to Jiddeh; but at Suez they brought us a telegram telling us to go on without stopping to Hodeïda, and afterwards to bring the Circassian back to Jiddeh. At Hodeïda, however, we found another telegram which said that we were to go on to Basra, for some soldiers."

"To Basra!" I exclaimed.

I began to feel hopelessly choked up with questions. I wanted to know more about the Circassian. I wanted to know more about everything. The man whom chance had brought for a moment to a stone beside me had an Odyssey in him, if one could only get at it.

"To Basra, *ya!*" he said before I could stop him. "And a time we had getting to Basra—more than two months. It was so hot we could not sleep at night, and again we had nothing to eat. And worst of all, the machine that made the water of the sea sweet got a hole in it, we used it so much, and after that the water was only partly sweet. And it was so bad we tried to find water on the land, and one night we went too near and sat." By which the mate of the *Leopard of the Sea* meant that they ran aground.

"We sat for two weeks, trying to get away. It was good that the wind did not blow in that time. In the end I don't know whether more water came into the sea or what happened, but all of a sudden we found that we could move. Then another calamity came on our heads. Although we had been sitting for two weeks we had been burning coal most of the time, trying to get away. So before we got to Basra no coal was left. The Circassian had bought more than we needed to get to Jiddeh or even to Hodeïda, but we never expected to go any farther. So we spent all our time finding wood for the machine. We burned up all the doors, all the chairs, all the tables, all the boats. We cut down

walls in the ship, we tore up decks. And then we only just got into the river of Basra.

"At Basra how good it was to put our feet on the earth! And if you knew what a country that is—hot, flat, dirty! They speak Arabic too, which none of us could understand but the Circassian. And thieves! We had already burned up most of the ship, but they would have stolen the rest if we had let them. So although we had come to land we still had no peace. And twelve hundred soldiers were waiting for us and expected to be taken away immediately. They had been in Arabia seven years, poor things, although when they went the government promised that they should stay only three. There had been three thousand of them in the beginning. More than half of them had died, not from bullets but from the sun of that country and its poisonous air. And not one of them had been paid or had had a new uniform in seven years. You would have wept to see them—how ragged and thin they were, and how they begged us to pay them and take them away.

"How could we take them away or pay them? We had not been paid ourselves for four or five months, and we had no food or water or coal, and nobody would give us any. We went to the governor, we went to the general, we went to everybody; but not a *para* could we get. The Circassian still had a little money, most of which we used in telegraphing to Constantinople. And still no money came. We had to sell our watches, our clothes, anything we had left. One day we even sold two windows—you know the little round windows in the wall of a ship? A fat Arab wanted them for his house. What could we do? We had to live. We couldn't find any others to take their places and so we nailed kerosene tins over the holes—one inside and one outside. They looked very funny, like blind eyes. They were at the bow, one on each side."

My companion paused a moment, as if musing over the blind eyes of the *Leopard of the Sea.* Then he rolled himself another cigarette. I noticed for the first time that the minarets of Yeni Jami were fully alight, and that other lights were beginning to hang in the darkness between them.

"In the end it was the Circassian again who got us away from Basra. He gave the captain the last money he had and told him to telegraph to Sultan Hamid and say five hundred pounds must be sent to us immedi-

ately or we would go to Europe and set the Circassian free. How was Sultain Hamid in his palace to know that we had no coal and could not go to Europe if we wanted to? But the next day the governor came to the captain with five hundred pounds and a decoration, which he pinned on his coat with much speech, and invited him not to let the dangerous Circassian go. The dangerous Circassian was there listening with the others, and the governor liked to speak with him more than with any of us, because he was an *effendi* and knew all the people of the Palace. The governor after all, poor man, was no better than an exile himself.

"So at last we started back to Jiddeh, with money in our pockets and bread in the cupboard and coal in the machine. The captain took care to put a lot in the place where the windows had been that he sold, to keep the tin tight against the wall of the ship. We got along very well that time. We reached Jiddeh in forty-five days. Before we got there the captain told the Circassian that he would not give him to the governor but that he would give another man, one of the soldiers, and say it was the Circassian, and bring the Circassian back to Egypt and let him go. But the Circassian would not allow him. He said it was not just that another man should be punished in his place, and that they would find it out in Constantinople and punish the captain and the governor and there would be many calamities. Even when the captain wept and kissed his feet, the Circassian would not allow him. You see, they had lived together for so many months and had suffered so much together that they had become friends. Ah, he was a very good man. Because he was a good man God rewarded him, as you will see."

I did not see at once, however, for my companion stopped again. And when he went on it was not to give me any essential light on the history of the mysterious Circassian.

"I told you about the soldiers we brought from Basra, who had been in Arabia seven years and who had never been paid. They were so glad to leave Basra that they made little noise about their money, and the general promised them that they would get it in Jiddeh. But when they heard the story of the Circassian, how he telegraphed to Sultan Hamid and got money for us, they said it was a shame that he didn't get money for them too: they had gone seven years without a *para*. And when the general of Jiddeh told them that they would be paid in Constantinople they made much noise. They would not believe that the

general had no money, and they brought the Circassian into it again and said he must telegraph to Sultan Hamid. They could not understand— It was only when the general threatened to keep them in Yemen and send the *Leopard of the Sea* home without them that they were quiet.

"We were sorry to leave the Circassian in Jiddeh, but we were glad to start away at last. It is the country of the Prophet, but *vallah!* it is a dirty country. We came quickly enough up to Egypt. The *Leopard of the Sea* walked more slowly than ever, because the hole in the machine for making the water of the sea sweet spoiled the water, and the bad water spoiled the machine of the ship. Still we went forward all the time. And in Egypt, thanks to God, there was no telegram. And our hearts became light when we came once more into the White Sea, where it seemed cold to us after Yemen.

"The captain said he would stop nowhere till we got to the Dardanelles, lest he should find a telegram. But our calamities were not quite done. It was because of the soldiers again. After they smelled the air of their country once more and ate bread every day, something came to them. They went to the captain one morning and said, 'We wish to go to Beïrout.' The captain told them he couldn't go to Beïrout. He had orders to go to Constantinople. What did they wish in Beïrout? They merely answered, 'We wish to go to Beïrout.' And in the end they went to Beïrout. What could the captain do? They were a thousand, with guns, and we were forty or fifty; and they were very angry. They said they were fools ever to have left Arabia without their money and they were tired of promises.

"So we went to Beïrout. The soldiers told the captain that he need not mix in their business: they had thought of a thing to do. Only let him wait till they were ready to go. And half of them stayed on the steamer to see that he did not go away and leave them. The other half went on shore and asked where was the governor's palace. Everyone was much surprised to see six hundred ragged soldiers going to the governor's palace, and many followed them. When they reached the palace the soldiers asked for the governor. A servant told them that the governor was not there. 'Never mind,' said the soldiers, 'we are six hundred, and on the ship there are six hundred more, and we will find the governor.' Then they were told to wait a little and the governor would come. And the governor did come. For I suppose he was not

pleased that there should be scandal in the city. Also it happened that he had very few soldiers of his own, because there was fighting in the Lebanon.

"He received the six hundred very politely, and gave them coffee and cigarettes, and asked them what he could do for them. And they told him their story, and what they had suffered, and how many of them had died, and that they had never been paid, and they said their hearts were broken and they wished their money. The governor said they were right, and it was hard for a man to go seven years without being paid. Still, he was not their general: how could he pay them? 'You can telegraph to Sultan Hamid,' they said, 'and he will send you the money. We shall wait here till the answer comes. And they waited, the six hundred of them.

"They made no noise and frightened no one, but they sat there on the floor with their rifles on their knees, and smoked cigarettes with the soldiers of the governor—who pitied them and said they would never drive them away. And by and by the governor came back and said he had heard from Sultan Hamid, who said it was a sin that his children should be treated in that way, and they should have their money. And then he called a scribe, and they made an account and the soldiers took the money. It came to eight or nine thousand pounds. And a mistake was made by the scribe, and some soldiers got too little, and the governor gave them what was owed. And the soldiers said they were glad they had not been paid in seven years—to get so much now.

"The captain was not pleased by this work, for it put us back many days and he thought Sultan Hamid might be angry if he got too many telegrams asking for money. However, the captain was pleased and we were all pleased to get away from Beïrout with no more trouble. But of course the soldiers were the most pleased, who smelled their own country again after seven years, and who had their money at last. They sat on the deck all day counting it, and singing, and some had pipes which they played, and those who were Laz or Kürds or Albanians danced the dances of their country. But before long the sea began to dance, and then they stopped. And by and by the wind blew so hard they could not stay on deck. We did not mind, because we were accustomed; and the wind was from the south, which helped us. But they were not accustomed, and they were very sick. The ship was so

small and they were so many that downstairs there was no room to turn without stepping on a sick soldier. And water poured down from above, and they all got soaked as they lay on the floor. Even if we had not burned up all the sofas and tables and chairs in the sea of Basra there never would have been beds enough for them. And at last there came a night when the captain and I began to think. The ship went this side, the ship went the other side, waves rolled back and forth in the cabin, everywhere there were cracks and cracks till we thought the *Leopard of the Sea* would crack in two. By God, it was a night of much fear. But what is there more than *kîsmet?* It was our *kîsmet* that that also should pass."

I saw it was time to open the shutter of my camera, for the lights between the minarets of Yeni Jami had grouped themselves into the image of a ship. It seemed an odd coincidence. When I sat down again on my stone, after pinching the bulb, the mate of the *Leopard of the Sea* continued to stare abstractedly at the little bark of gold sailing in the dark sky.

"Who shall escape his destiny?" he uttered at length. "For six months we had had no peace. We had lacked bread. We had suffered storms. We had sat on the floor of the sea. We had been burned and frozen. We had been robbed. We had been worse off than beggars. We had been unjustly treated. We had eaten all manner of dung. But no harm had come to us, thanks to God! And the morning after that night was like a morning of paradise. The sun was bright and warm. The sea was blue blue. There was no wind. There were hardly any waves, for we were among the islands again. We could see on them the flowers of almond trees and peach trees. The soldiers said they heard the birds. They had forgotten all their calamities, the soldiers, and were sitting on the deck again, counting their gold, singing, playing pipes, dancing. And in front of us we could see the mountains of the Dardanelles."

He sighed, telling the beads of the string he carried as he went over the memory in his mind.

"There was only one thing: the *Leopard of the Sea* sat very low in the water. Why not, after the rivers that came in the night before? I thought nothing of it. We pumped, but we didn't mind, because we were so near home. I saw, though, that the captain was thinking. I asked him if he was afraid they would make trouble for us about the

telegrams and the money, Sultan Hamid often did things for reasons that were not apparent, and he never forgot.

" 'God love you!' said the captain. 'I think nothing of that. But do you remember those windows we sold in Basra? Those are what make me think. We needed bread then, it is true, and no one can blame us. Also we nailed the tin very tightly. But in the storm I kept thinking of them. And you see the bow now is lower than the stern. Those blind eyes are under the water.'

" 'They will still see the way to Stamboul,' I told him. 'There is plenty of coal behind the tin.'

" 'Yes,' he said, 'but coal is like rice. It drinks up water, more and more, without your knowing it.'

" 'Eh, if we have a *pilaf* of coal in the ship, what matter?' I said.

"He laughed.

" 'I would not mind so much if we had not burned the boats. Just look downstairs and see if there is much water about.'

"I looked, and I couldn't find any to speak of. I went down to the engine room, without telling them why I came, and there was very little. What they were thinking of down there was the machine. It had become more and more rotten, from the bad water, till it would hardly work. The door of our house was open in front of us, but when we would have run to it like boys, the *Leopard of the Sea* could only walk, slowly, slowly, like an old man."

He had left out enormously, and I realized in the end that I had small notion what manner of man he was himself. But I am bound to say that he did make vivid, as we squatted there on our neighbourly stones, the final case of the *Leopard of the Sea.*

"Why should I make much speech? The old man never found the door of his house. It was because of his blind eyes. But until the last moment we hoped we might get to the Dardanelles. The sea became more and more quiet. It was more beautiful than anything I have ever seen, like blue jewels with light shining through them. A great purple island stood not far away, and white houses were on it. And sails played like children on the blue of the sea. It was so beautiful and so still that the soldiers were not frightened. They noticed that the ship settled in the water, but the captain told them it was nothing. He asked me what we should do—whether we should let off steam to keep the machine from bursting. We finally decided not to. We

might reach land after all, and steamers and ships were all about us. While if we let off steam and signalled for help, there would be much confusion and the soldiers might make another calamity; for they were very simple. *'Akh!* if they only hadn't made us go to Beïrout!' the captain said. 'We would have been at home by this time.' But we were very sorry for them."

He stopped again for a moment. Yet I knew in my perverted literary heart that it was wholly without melodramatic intent.

"The sun set. Night came—a warm night of stars. I remember how they looked, and how the soldiers sang on the deck, and then how the *Leopard of the Sea* suddenly began to run—but down, pitching forward."

I wondered many things, but chiefly if he would say anything more. It seemed indecent to ask him—with that picture in my eyes of a lighted steamer suddenly lurching, bow foremost, out of sight. Presently he did say something, though not just what I hoped. First, however, he leaned over and patted the ground.

"The earth!" he said. "The earth! I like to feel that under my feet!"

Then he got up, made me a courteous salaam, and left me on my stone to stare at the little ship of light hanging over the dark mosque.

The Four-fingered Glove

BY EDUARD ENGEL

"Now, do me the favor, little one, to sit still for a while. I can't bear your nervous shifting any longer!"

With a show of rage that was both comic and tender, the speaker pushed the other one into a corner of the sofa. He was fully a head shorter than his brother, whom he addressed as "little one"; but his broad shoulders, great chest and erect carriage were all evidences of his military service. Even in his own home, in the presence of his tender little wife, his voice assumed the tone of command. So "Little Hans" obeyed, smiling a protest. He was obviously in a condition of nervous excitement; and because of the severity and duration of the strain, was approaching collapse.

"Very well, Richard, I promise to keep quite still. Only I should like to have a drop to drink."

"Oh, why didn't I think of that before?" cried the wife of the chief of police, as she started out of the room.

"Stay here, Evelyn!" commanded the chief. "You'll probably give the boy a cup of coffee, and under present conditions that would do him no good."

"But—"

"No buts! In the name of the law! Send the girl over immediately to the Dome Hotel: Chief of Police Farne sends his regards and wishes a quart of champagne on ice!"

"But champagne at this hour?" objected Hans, the younger brother, looking at his watch. "It is only half-past six."

"It is a bit later here in Cologne. I suppose your watch is still set according to Paris time? However that may be, you must drink champagne. You'll thank me for it afterward. Besides, it's pretty late for me. You got me out of my sheets this morning at three o'clock. Evelyn has not slept a wink since then, either. And how about you?"

Hans declared that he had slept famously on the train, but his brother knew better than that. "By the time the wine gets here you can have told quite a portion of your wild story. Besides, the minister of police wishes to have my report in hand by two o'clock this afternoon. So let us begin!"

The girl came in just then with the bucket full of crushed ice out of the top of which the neck of a bottle protruded. The glasses were quickly filled, emptied and filled again. Then Hans began his narrative: "Yesterday morning at this time I did not even suspect the existence of this scoundrel—and still less did I imagine that I would be with you within twenty-four hours. About nine o'clock the plot began to unfold. But I see you know nothing at all about it. No matter—just get ready to write your report."

The chief of police took out his notebook, sharpened his pencil and listened. In Evelyn's sleep-heavy eyes all traces of fatigue were disappearing as she listened, devoured by curiosity, to her brother-in-law's story.

"First of all I must tell you of the financial crash in the Comptoir d'Escompte. But of that you have surely heard."

"Certainly," answered Richard. "We thought of you immediately; but only a week ago you wrote us that your position would not be affected by this smash."

"Yes, I did; but misfortunes never come singly. Since then one crash has followed another so that I have just a thousand francs left out of the fifteen thousand that I had saved during my six years of service as German and English correspondence clerk. But I fancy that is enough for a second bottle of champagne. Here's my entire fortune!" And with that he drew out of his cardcase a solitary thousand-franc note. "You are surprised? Well, if you have to silver-plate copper stocks there is not much left. During the whole of the night the rushing wheels of the railway carriage have been droning into my ears, 'All is gone, gone, gone!' What day of the week is this?"

"Saturday."

"And yesterday was Friday. Naturally it happened on a Friday—and yet one is supposed not to be superstitious! Yesterday morning about half-past nine I went, as usual, to the Comptoir d'Escompte in the rue Bergère. The night before I had spent with the assistant director and the first cashier in the Porte St. Martin Théâtre. Afterward

we had a bit of supper, and, as the weather was fine, I strolled up and down the boulevards with my companions, turning in about one o'clock. I slept restlessly—the slump in copper stocks had worried me quite a bit; and the following morning, as I ascended the steps of the bank, I was depressed and sleepy. Only when I reached the door did I notice one of the higher police officials—one of your Paris colleagues. To the right and left of him were two sergeants who barred my path.

" 'No one is permitted to pass here, monsieur!'

" 'But I am the secretary! What has happened?'

" 'That we are not allowed to tell you. But under no condition can you be permitted to enter.'

" 'Then will you, at least, have the goodness to take in my card?'

"One of the policemen disappeared with my card. He returned hurriedly, whispered a few words to his superior, who then turned to me.

" 'You may enter, sir. The director is in the antechamber.'

"On my desk in the lifeless office lay a large letter, addressed to me and sealed. I suspected the worst. Hastily I tore open the envelope: it was my dismissal! Here is the document. Naturally: deep regrets —faithful service—impossible condition of affairs—with greatest esteem, and so forth.

"At that moment, the director entered, and with him was the chief of police, very much excited. My superior and I had always got on well together, and I wanted to take leave of him. Before I could utter a word, he wailed:

" 'But, my dear Monsieur Hans, what a horrible misfortune this theft is! It was just what we needed at this time! More than four million francs have been stolen!'

"I did not comprehend the meaning of a single word.

" 'What! you have not heard about it? Thieves have broken in here and blasted the vault door with its three locks as though it had all been tin. The police think they used melinite—or some such devilish stuff. The door to the money vault was burst off its hinges, or sawed off—I don't know which. But all the money in it was taken. This is almost a worse misfortune than the one which necessitated your dismissal.'

" 'But how is that possible, director?' I asked, feeling the necessity of saying something.

" 'How should I know? Both sets of keys are here in my hand. After counting the contents of this vault, and testing the seals, Monsieur Souchon, our first cashier, handed me the keys in the presence of yourself and Monsieur Chevallets, the head bookkeeper'—I nodded assent—'and we four left the office together. Since then'—he smiled somewhat bitterly—'the excellent police system has discovered exactly where the four of us spent our time after seven o'clock last night. The police are good enough to assure each one of us that he is not the thief. Here are the keys—but the thief had no use for them. Such unimportant things as keys do not seem to concern modern thieves at all. Come with me and look at the vault for yourself.'

"He stormed on ahead through the several offices until he came to the narrow passage that led to the vault—a sort of alcove on one side of the principal room.

" 'He must have hidden himself here under the step during the afternoon. We found Vaillant the watchdog poisoned with strychnine. And as for the night watchman Lesoudier the scoundrel simply shot him in the head—he will hardly live an hour longer and has not regained consciousness, so that it will be impossible to get any information from him. Notice the cleverness of this scoundrel: Here's a bundle of Russian bonds, valued at more than five million francs—the value was marked on the wrapper. But you see that he has not even broken a single seal of it. In the same way he avoided taking French bonds, or anything that might have led to his detection. On the other hand, however, he carried off with him just as much as he possibly could lug of the ready money. Up to the present moment Monsieur Souchon has not been able to determine exactly how much he did take—but we know that over four million francs in French bank-notes have disappeared. There were one package with two thousand 1,000-franc notes, three packages each of a thousand 500-franc notes—that figures three and a half millions, and the balance in several smaller packages of 100-franc notes. He also took several packages of louis. Two or three of these are gone, two more have been broken open and a couple of dozen coins taken from them. Four of these louis were lying here on the floor this morning, one had rolled into the other room. There you will see are still the bits of paper in which the gold was wrapped. But he did not take more than a few thousand francs in gold—it was evidently too cumbersome for him.' "

"Our scoundrels, absconding cashiers and others of their ilk, are usually not so clever—God be praised!" interjected the Cologne chief of police, interrupting his brother's conversation and draining his glass.

"'Is there no clue?' I asked the director.

"'A clue, yes; but no thief! A man who plunders and murders with such amazing boldness and cleverness is seldom trapped. The police commissioner is of the belief that he will be captured before the day is over. But the police always talk like that. Such words do not aid in the capture, but they are consoling.'

"'And the clue?'

"'Both Monsieur Souchon and Monsieur Chevallets declare that they have noticed a big, broad-shouldered, smoothly shaven fellow, who of late has been here day after day, sometimes more than once a day. He was always faultlessly dressed, in the manner of an English gentleman; and he brought five-pound notes to be changed. He always stood as long as possible at the cashier's window, inquired after the rate of exchange, examined every louis, and once refused to take a good coin. Yesterday morning he was here and changed three five-pound notes into some larger German notes and some smaller coin. Monsieur Souchon declares that at that visit the stranger did not take his glance away from the vault. It was very evident that he was neither an Englishman nor an American, for he spoke as good French as I do.'

"'But that is a very feeble clue,' I remarked.

"'Let me continue: During all these visits of money-changing the stranger wore thick, black leather gloves which he did not remove, not even to pick up the smaller coins. Souchon remarked this fact at the second visit of the stranger. And then he noticed that the man had only four fingers on his left hand—the little finger was missing!'"

"And the police of Paris have not been able in twenty-four hours to land a thief and murderer so plainly marked as this?" cried Richard in deep disgust. Then he thought a moment and asked, "And not even the numbers of the larger bank bills were registered in your office?"

"But I beg of you," answered Hans, "to tell me how such a thing would have been possible when the amount of money handled daily amounts to millions? It would have kept several clerks busy all day long doing nothing but entering the numbers of these bank-notes. In this respect the criminal was quite safe from detection.

"I realized how superfluous I was. I could be of no service whatever,

and I suppose I ought to have felt relieved that the police allowed me to go unmolested. The director was far too excited to acknowledge my leave with anything more than a casual handshake.

"Before going I asked the commissioner of police what steps they had taken toward detecting the criminal.

"'All that are possible and customary in such cases,' he told me. 'Within an hour the whole of France, all border stations and the police systems of all foreign countries were notified by telegraph. The exact description, according to the testimonies of Monsieur Souchon and Monsieur Chevallets, has been posted at all railway stations. Here in Paris the police are making a house-to-house canvass to find out if anybody has seen anything of a man with a four-fingered left hand. I believe that by night we shall have trapped him.'

"'I wish you luck!' I remarked as I left.

"The only thing for me to do was to leave Paris immediately. It was quite hopeless to think of finding at short notice a position like the one that I had held—especially as everyone who had been in the employ of the Comptoir d'Escompte would be more or less under a cloud of suspicion. Without an income one cannot afford to live in Paris long. Besides, Paris had suddenly grown distasteful to me. I needed consolation, and so longed for my home, for those who were nearest to me—a feeling that one has most strongly when misfortune comes. Therefore —Cologne. The dome, the carnival and the eau de Cologne—surely nothing can excel these!

"I went sadly enough to my lodgings on the fourth floor in the rue des Petits Champs. My few belongings were soon packed. My big family trunk is coming by freight, addressed to you. Your wife will find enough French novels in it to last her a year; she had better select them cautiously, however. A smaller trunk I checked as baggage, so that I had but my handbag to carry with me.

"What with packing, attending to errands, a few farewell visits and a trip to the Louvre to buy something for your wife, then for my last meal at the Palais Royal, and the few remaining hours of the day were gone. Dear old Madame Perrin, with whom I have lived for five years—she called me 'a pearl of a lodger' as she took tearful leave of me—insisted upon getting a fiacre for me. When it came its number was 13513—the worst kind of a bad luck number, for besides the two

thirteens the sum of the digits is thirteen, too! In the worst possible mood I drove to the Gare du Nord.

"From the rue des Petits Champs to the railway station is a matter of probably twenty minutes, but on this occasion it seemed to me to take hours. During this farewell drive the whole of my Paris life passed before my eyes like a panorama. There, opposite the library, behind the little park of the Place Louvois, I had first lived in a little Hôtel Lulli when, as a stupid boy, I went to Paris six years ago; there, at that banker's in the rue Richelieu, I had changed my first hundred-mark note into louis; there—"

"I wish you would omit about a dozen of such sentimental recollections, Hans, and let the express train start for Cologne!" interrupted Richard; but Evelyn protested, for everything that had to do with Paris was of the deepest interest to her.

Hans continued: "At the corner of the rue Drouet and the rue Lafayette—"

"Oh, leave the rue for the rue, and begin your trip!" urged Richard, who was beginning to worry about his report to the minister of police.

"No, I cannot leave this rue—and you will soon know why. At that corner my driver started to turn to the right when he collided with another cab coming furiously from the opposite direction. My driver tried to turn aside while the other one attempted to stop his horse. Both only partially succeeded, and the two cabs collided, but not very violently. Neither horses nor vehicles were damaged, and, save for a small dent in my hat, there were no serious consequences. But the passenger of the other cab leaned out of the window and yelled anxiously to his driver: 'What the devil has happened? Drive on, if you want to earn that tip. We'll miss the train!'

"It was obvious that he was heading for the Gare du Nord; but which train could he mean? The express for Germany did not leave until twenty minutes after six, and it was scarcely five forty-five. But what a fool I was to think that the train by which I was leaving was the only one from the Gare du Nord!

"The man was in a fearful hurry—that one could see in his features. His eyes were wide with fear and his face was mottled with terror. I saw the face for only a second or two, but it made so distinct an impression on me that I could have picked it out of a thousand others. He had not seen me at all.

"According to my silly old habit I arrived at the railway station far too early. So there I sat in the inexpressibly bleak barn that in Paris is known as the waiting-room. At the entrance gate stood a rather greasy official. The exits to the train platforms were kept locked almost until the moment of departure. To my sorrow I had discovered that this express train carried only first-class passengers, the fare being fifteen francs more than on the mail train leaving two and a half hours later. But as I was at the railway station I had no patience to wait for a later train.

"'*Le Soir!—Le Télégraphe!—La France!*' cried the newsboy. I bought all the evening papers he had so that I might be supplied with reading matter for the sleepless night. I was also anxious to see what the papers had to say about the robbery.

"Then I seated myself on the low bench directly next to the glass door that opened on to the train shed. My handbag lay to my left, and propping my right elbow on my rolled-up traveling rug, I began to read *Le Soir*. On the first page there was a leading article about the 'Murder and Robbery in the Comptoir d'Escompte.' There was nothing new in it, save some misstatements and finally the usual close: 'The police are on the track of the criminal. We hope tomorrow morning to be able to give our readers a full account of the affair.' There were no nasty suspicions uttered against the management or the personnel of the Comptoir. There was only the notice: 'The institution has dismissed all save the most important of its employees.'

"On the second and third pages of the paper there was the usual news of the day. I turned over and found that the entire fourth page had been given over to an advertisement:

"MURDER AND ROBBERY OF 4,322,260 FRANCS

"During the night of March 21-22, between half-past seven in the evening and seven in the morning, there were stolen out of the vault of the Comptoir d'Escompte 4,320,180 francs in bank-notes of 1,000, 500 and 100 francs; also 2,080 francs in louis. The bank-notes were wrapped in eleven packages sealed with the bank's seal. The thief poisoned the watchdog with strychnine and shot the night watchman with a revolver of small calibre. There are no evidences of a struggle between the criminal and the watchman. The vault door was blasted by two melinite caps.

"The suspect is a man of about forty years, something above middle height, broad-shouldered, smooth-shaven face. He is evidently a Frenchman, speaking the language perfectly. He is easily to be recognized by the fact that the little finger of his left hand is missing.

"Whoever captures or leads to the capture of the criminal will receive a reward, to be paid in cash, of 5 per cent. of the sum that is restored. The amount of the reward to be at least 50,000 francs."

"Then at the highest, two hundred and sixteen thousand, one hundred and thirteen francs," said Richard quietly.

"How quickly you figured that! I smiled as I read the advertisement. How often have I not seen similar notices, dealing with smaller rewards. But I knew that I might be thrown directly in the company of such criminals and yet not recognize them, for I have no knack at that sort of thing. My luck in finding lost articles is just about of the same kind. In all my life I have never found anything except one old vest button. All this occurred to me while I was reading the advertisement. It made no particular impression upon me, for I knew the details even better than they were set forth in the article. Nevertheless the description of the criminal kept flaunting itself across my mind. Above middle height! What does that mean? At least three or four out of every ten men answer that description. Broad-shouldered! Another common characteristic. Smooth-shaven face! Easily disguised."

"Still it is better than a bearded face," interrupted Richard, "for beards can be shaved."

"Perfect French is spoken by several millions of Frenchmen. The only fact that could not easily be hidden was the one about the four fingers on the left hand. I believe I could catch a four-fingered scoundrel if he would be obliging enough to run across my path.

"As I was amusing myself by turning all this over in my mind, a man hurriedly entered the waiting-room. He carried a brand-new yellow valise—it was my man: the fellow in the cab that had collided with mine. Then he was going on the same train with me! But why had he been in such a hurry, and why had he come into the waiting-room so much later, for I had wasted time in checking my trunk and had been sitting here a full ten minutes!

" 'Has the express train for Cologne gone?' he asked the ticket-taker in anxious tones.

"'You still have fifteen minutes, sir.'

"'Are you sure?'

"'It is as I say!'

"'The beast of a cab-driver took me to the Eastern Railway Station, although I had told him distinctly the Northern one. He insists that I told him otherwise. Did you ever hear of such impudence!'

"'Oh, yes, that happens now and then,' ventured the official.

"'First the ass collides with every cab he meets, then he takes me to the wrong railway station, then finally he demands a double fare because he has had a long trip!'

"With that the stranger turned the knob of the door that led to the train shed. It was locked, and he learned this fact with obvious impatience. Unconsciously—I did not know why, not having the slightest reason for any suspicion—I looked at the man's left hand. This I had done with everyone I had met since morning. There were five healthy fingers there, and I laughed at myself. I, who had never found a penny, never a four-leaved clover, was quite ready to discover a four-fingered thief among the two and a half millions of Parisians!

"Again I picked up *Le Soir*, and just to while away time read a bit of the feuilleton. I had just arrived at a scene in which a lady of the Quartier de l'Europe was about to fall a victim to poison, when the glass door to the train shed was opened from without, and the announcement was snarled through the waiting-room: 'Passengers for Tergnier, St. Quentin, Belgium and Germany!' Despite the fact that I had been sitting next to the door, the man with the yellow valise dashed ahead of me. With most discourteous haste he shot past me, out of the door and soon disappeared in the darkness of the evening.

"The train was quite crowded and I had difficulty in finding a compartment. I walked down the platform alongside the train. At every window heads appeared and proved that the train was crowded. There in the last compartment only one head appeared. I gave the porter a franc and asked him to unlock the door. He hesitated a few moments, murmuring something about 'Reserved.' Then he glanced up at the big clock, and when the minute hand stood close before the figure four he decided rapidly and opened the door despite the resisting hand that was laid on it from within. I jumped in, the porter slammed the door behind me, and—I found myself opposite the man with the yellow valise!

"What an unavoidable person this is, thought I. He had evidently expected to retain the compartment for himself. Furiously he let down the window, stretched his head far out so that the ends of his long side-whiskers fluttered, and yelled at the porter: 'Did I give you five francs to stuff this compartment full of people? Didn't I tell you that I wished to be alone?'

"I thought this was going a little far, so I said politely: 'Everyone has equal rights on trains, monsieur!'

"But he didn't seem to hear me at all, for still leaning out of the window he continued to row with the porter. The latter knew that the train was due to leave any second, so he simply shrugged his shoulders derisively.

"The minute hand was touching the figure four when the gentleman with the side-whiskers suddenly drew back into the compartment and became silent. The door was opened, and on the dashboard stood a man in ordinary dress who obviously was a detective. He leaned forward, scrutinized us closely for an instant and then asked curtly: 'What is your destination?'

"When the door opened, my traveling companion had become meek enough. Meantime he gathered his courage and now answered brusquely: 'How do you dare to intrude in such a manner and ask such an impertinent question? Who are you?'

"The detective was on the point of growing angry and replying in the same key; but the insolence of my traveling companion convinced him, and he touched his hat lightly and said: 'I beg your pardon.' Then he stepped down to the platform. I heard him open the door of the neighboring compartment, in which there was a horde of Englishwomen, and close it quickly again. The minute of departure had already passed, a bell sounded, the locomotive gave out a shrill whistle, and the train began to move.

"My fellow-traveler drew a deep breath of relief. 'What do you think of such unheard-of impudence?' asked he, turning politely toward me.

" 'Most likely it is a detective who is looking for that criminal,' I answered quietly.

" 'Yes, that is probably who it was. Nevertheless he might have been a bit more polite. What criminal are they seeking?'

"I took the copy of *Le Soir* out of my overcoat pocket, opened it at

the fourth page, and handed it over to him. He thanked me, and read it most attentively. This gave me an opportunity to study his face; but in the immobile features there was not even the interest that I expected to find in a person who was getting his first information about this affair. In the blue eyes alone, under the grayish eyebrows, there was an occasional flash of keenness.

"The gas-jet at the top of the compartment was flickering rather dimly. My bearded companion raised the newspaper nearer his eyes. Possibly the description of the criminal interested him. Again I stared at his two great bony hands and childishly began to count the fingers on them. Each one contained five.

"Thanking me, he returned the paper. 'Rather an important robbery. No wonder the police are on the watch. Two hundred thousand francs reward is no bagatelle. But the discovery is child's play. The police need only count the fingers of everyone,' and he laughed loudly—a bit too loudly and roughly.

" 'I fear we'll be pestered frequently by the police en route.'

" 'Do you think so? It is very uncomfortable to travel when every passenger is suspected of being a murderer and a thief. Why don't they examine the passengers on the entire train and then tack a notice on the door of every compartment: "The murderer and thief is not in this compartment!" ' and again he laughed boisterously.

"Then he asked rather solicitously: 'May I ask how far I am to have the pleasure of your company?'

" 'I am going through to Cologne.'

" 'What a coincidence! My ticket reads to Cologne also. I am going to see the eleven thousand virgins'—again the disagreeable laugh —'then I continue my trip to Berlin. I suppose the police will greet us in Cologne and ask a lot of probing questions?'

" 'That is most likely,' I answered, and I was about to add: 'Possibly my brother, who is the chief of police there, will meet us.' But I thought better of this and decided not to let him know this detail, for he might have taken me for a disguised police officer, and then the long journey might be very uncomfortable for me. I knew that I had to content myself with his company for eleven hours, and made up my mind to do it with as good grace as possible.

"Each of us had taken to himself an entire side of the compartment. The arm rests had been folded back; and although I knew very well

that it would not be possible for me to sleep, yet I made every preparation for it. The weather was mild and damp, and the two hot water heaters threw out a comfortable amount of warmth. I rolled my rug into a pillow and stretched myself out on the seat so that I faced my companion. Then I closed my eyes and tried to sleep.

"The express train made good time. Unfortunately our compartment was the last one of the coach, so that I was directly over the trucks and felt every vibration of the wheels. The monotonous music made by the wheels as they tore along over the steel rails began to make my brain numb; yet sleep did not come.

"My bearded traveling companion either could not sleep or he had no desire to. He had not even flung himself down. Before stretching myself out I had taken the precaution of drawing the shutter half across the globe of the light. This shaded my eyes, and at the same time left my companion sitting in the bright light so that I could peep at him from between my half-closed eyes. He doubtless thought I had fallen asleep, for he paid no further attention to me. In the rack over his head lay his new yellow valise, tipped with nickel trimmings, brightly illuminated by the gaslight. It looked brand-new, as though it had just been purchased. It was a so-called accordion valise, but it was jammed so full of stuff that its sides had scarcely a pleat left in them. All this I noticed through my half-closed eyes, and wondered idly why he had purchased such a valise! Never before had I taken such accurate notice of things that did not in the least concern me.

"My companion had taken off his brown derby, which was also a brand-new one, and had laid it in the rack next to his valise. Then he took out of his overcoat pocket a black silk traveling cap, which also appeared new. In taking out the cap he had half drawn with it out of the pocket a black winter glove with white lining. This glove was the only thing about the man that did not have the appearance of being absolutely new.

He thumbed eagerly a newly bought railway guide. From time to time he stole a look across the top of the book at me. Each time he did so I closed my eyes, almost unconsciously. I did not know why, but it seemed as though someone pressed them tight as soon as he glanced over at me.

"Suddenly he stood up very cautiously and laid his railway guide gently in the rack, as though it were something fragile. Then he turned

around and looked at me with a careful, anxious glance. I did not stir, but hurriedly closed my eyes. Then he began very carefully to draw out the red plush cushion upon which he had been sitting. After each jerk he would stop and listen. He succeeded in drawing it out as far as it would come. I thought this very strange, for I had found my seat quite comfortable and amply wide. But then my companion was much broader than I was. Even so, would not a few inches have sufficed?

"After he had finished with this tedious business he again turned about and shot a keen glance at me. I seemed to feel it, even through my closed eyelids. Then I heard him turn away, and I risked opening my eyes the slightest bit to watch him. With movements even more cautious he took hold of the valise, lifted it and supported it with his left hand, so that it might not scrape against the thin iron frame of the rack. He raised it clear of this, and then placed it gently on the seat.

"What a fussy fellow! I thought. How anxious he is that his pretty, new valise shall not receive the slightest scratch! Or is he possibly so considerate because of my slumber? He hardly looks that sort.

"Then he reached into his trousers pocket and pulled out a thin key. Carefully he inserted this in the lock, and with a crackling noise the overstuffed bag flew open. He started in fright and shrank as though someone had suddenly grabbed him by the nape of his neck. Then he straightened himself again and faced me. He must have stood beside me staring; I felt as though the hot breath of some savage beast were being poured out over me. I did not dare to open my eyes, but I felt very plainly that he was leaning over me. I heard his breathing distinctly, and I knew that these few seconds would decide my fate. Had I made the slightest motion or had my eyelids twitched I should have been done for.

"He must have been thoroughly convinced of the genuineness of my slumber, for I heard him leave me and seat himself. A minute afterward he got up again and reached for the lampshade with his right arm, as though he wished to throw back the shutter so that he might watch me the better. But he changed his mind, and the raised arm sank again. Once, as though prompted by a quick resolution, he reached in his right overcoat pocket—not in the one out of which the finger-tips of the glove had peeped. For possibly half a minute

his hand remained in the pocket; but it was empty when he drew it out.

"And then—great heavens, what was that! Out of the open valise he took a large package wrapped in newspaper and tied with heavy twine and stuffed this rapidly into the space under the drawn seat. Then another package, and still another. If only I could have seen more distinctly, have dared to turn my head a bit! I did not know what he was trying to hide from me, any more than I knew whether he was a murderer or a maniac. But I did know that I was a witness to the second act of some fearful tragedy.

"All I could do was to wish that the train might make a stop at a station. To be able to get out, to go into some other compartment, or even to leave the train and wait for the next one—anything rather than remain here with this horrible man and anger him by my presence!

"I wondered how long it would be before we reached the next stopping-place. The express train had stopped once—Compiègne had been the name of the station called out; but that was quite an hour ago. Just then the locomotive gave a warning whistle, began to slow up and stopped.

"The man opposite hurriedly pushed the seat back into its place and sat down. He tried to close the valise, too, but the contents had become disordered and part of them had been spilled out on the seat. He was not able to get it in order before the train stopped. The station was Tergnier. Suddenly the door was hurriedly flung open. My traveling companion sat opposite me, his teeth clenched, one hand plunged in his overcoat pocket and his face set in desperate resolution. He tried to hide the valise under his overcoat. At that moment he seemed even to have forgotten me.

"But his fear—for fear it obviously was—proved to be groundless. A workman had entered the compartment and, without saying a word, had handed out the heating pans, which had grown cold. In their place he put two warm ones, left the compartment and slammed the door behind him. The guard cried: 'This train stops two minutes!' Despite the fact that I had so longed for relief, I remained quiet and bit my lips. I had decided to stay, come what would.

"But I knew that I must do more than just pretend sleep in order to convince the man with whom I was dealing. I tossed about as though I resented having my slumber broken, rearranged the pillow,

stared about me drunk with sleep—even at the fellow opposite me—and was once more affecting innocent slumber.

"I wondered whether my deception had succeeded, or whether he had noticed that I was simply playing with him! I was sure that he must have heard how my heart was beating, for I could hear it distinctly in the stillness of the night while the train was stopping. There was still time to jump up and leave the compartment.

"It was possible that I was all wrong in my suspicion. How could this man with five sound fingers on each hand be the thief and murderer? But were they so sure that the man who committed the deed was the same as the fellow with the four-fingered left hand who had made himself so conspicuous at the cashier's window? Was it not possible that he had an accomplice who was now carrying off half the booty? Still I decided to remain; and by this time it was too late for flight, as the train had already started.

"So long as we were not going at full speed my companion remained seated, his right hand still plunged in the pocket of his overcoat; but now his eyes were keenly scrutinizing me. It amazed me to find how little light the human eye needs in order to distinguish objects about it! I seemed to keep my eyelashes parted by the breadth of but a single hair, and yet I could see everything distinctly.

"I wondered what the fellow was clutching in his overcoat pocket. I knew he was holding something, for I could see how tensely strained were the cords of his wrist. Did he have a package secreted there, too? The overcoat pocket bulged downward in a vertical line—and then I knew that he had either a knife or a revolver! As though driven by a cyclone, my thoughts began to revolve. I thought of death, but oddly enough had not the slightest fear. Death would not have been half so dreadful just then as the company of that man opposite and the puzzle of his identity. My head remained perfectly clear. I counted the black buttons on the overcoat that held the murderous weapon directed at me. And I even had a curiosity to know whether there was still another button on the skirt of the coat that was thrown back. At that moment this detail seemed of the highest importance!

"I knew if the suspense lasted very much longer I should go mad. I felt as though I would have to jump up and cry: 'I have not been sleeping at all! Haven't you noticed that I have only been feigning? You are the murderer and the thief—and I know it!' The pulses in

my temples were beating violently; the soles of my feet were prickling as though a thousand ants were crawling on them.

"I had never before ridden on this train; but I had noticed on the time-table in the railway station that this express made very few stops. I wondered how matters would continue in this rolling coffin. Would the strain last to the Belgian border? According to my calculation, that was still two hours away. I knew that just as soon as the train had gained sufficient speed he would resume his task. And if he were trying to hide the traces of a crime, would he not argue to himself: Dead men tell no tales? Poor Lesoudier, the night watchman, had told none. Had he had the slightest suspicion about me, that same small calibre revolver would have forced me into silence. And how easy it would have been for so strong a man to throw me out of the window. And even if he did not suspect me, he knew at least that I was aware of the crime that had been committed the previous night in the rue Bergère.

"All manner of gruesome ways of committing murder flashed across my mind. Up to that time I had not thought of strangulation, but this thought now took complete possession of me. It would certainly be the easiest way to rid himself of me. A revolver ball would leave traces, and besides the shot might be heard and reported by the Englishwomen in the adjoining compartment.

"He still sat quietly opposite me, listening to the accelerating speed of the train. I had now an opportunity to think out why he was hiding the bundles. His scheme evidently was to empty his valise before reaching the Belgian border; then, after passing this and the German boundary, the loot was to be put back into the valise and detection thus avoided.

"But was there not a loophole for failure in this scheme? Suppose some fellow-passenger were to enter this compartment en route! But then I recalled that the revolver would make away with any unwelcome guest. Besides, who would take a train that passed all the important Belgian cities and those on the German border during the middle of the night? There are many more conveniently scheduled trains than this one for local travel. But suppose someone were to enter? So long as his booty was buried under the seat he was safe even if the compartment were filled with travelers. He could simply remain seated till everyone else had left at Cologne, and then repack the

bundles into the valise. I realized now how childishly simple the whole plan was.

" 'St. Quentin!' Here the doors were not even opened. My traveling companion had moved over toward the window nearer the platform. He was listening to a conversation between a couple of trainmen, one of whom asked jestingly: 'Have you the four-fingered murderer in your train?'

" 'Perhaps,' answered the other laughingly, 'but he has not yet introduced himself to us. Don't you want to ask and find out?'

" 'The bank was on the verge of failure without that, wasn't it?'

" 'Yes, so it is rumored. But time's up. Good night! I come back tomorrow on the slow train, No. 11.'

" 'Good night!'

"Again the train started. My fellow-traveler waited until it had gathered full speed, then he cautiously rose and again drew out the seat. Once more he opened his valise and took out five bundles more, which he laid next to the other three. He did not seem to bother about me at all any more as, no doubt, he was quite ready to dispose of me—it mattered nothing whether I was awake or asleep.

"Now that this unloading of the valise had been accomplished there remained practically nothing in it but some linen, a brush and a pair of shoes. He looked amusedly at the empty bag, when it occurred to him that the fact of its emptiness might arouse the suspicion of the customs officials. He hit upon a scheme which must have pleased him, for as he turned his face to me I could see that he was smiling with self-satisfaction. First he replaced the seats, covering the bundles. Then after a moment's hesitation he took off his heavy overcoat and laid it on the seat. As though it were drawn down by a heavy weight the coat slipped to the floor and something in it struck the metal warming pans with a thud.

"Had I heard anything! Had I been awakened by it! With a nervous motion he lifted the coat, drew a heavy bulldog revolver out of the side pocket and laid it on the seat.

"I had heard nothing, as I lay there breathing peacefully as before. And what a blessing it was, still to be able to breathe!

"My ruse had disarmed him, for he put the revolver in his right trousers pocket so that only the end of the butt peeped forth. Then he took off his coat and vest, slipped on his overcoat, buttoned all the

buttons and again replaced the revolver in his outside pocket. The coat and vest he then threw carelessly into the valise and locked it.

"Now the job was done. He had his treasure safely hidden, and was ready to face both sets of customs officials.

"The fearful tension now abated a bit for both of us. He had grown tired, and he stretched himself out on the seat—like a dragon guarding his treasure. But his rest was short-lived, for in ten minutes he jumped up, reached for his railway guide and began studying it. Now there was scarcely anything more for me to see, and I would gladly have fallen asleep if such a thing had been possible. Instead I began to wonder how near to the Belgian border we must be. As I speculated, my roving stolen glances fell on a black object that lay on the floor between the feet of my fellow-traveler. It looked as though it were alive and creeping, but soon I noticed that the motion was imparted to it by the restless twitching of my companion's feet. The shadow of the seat made it impossible for me to make out this black object and I did not dare to open my eyes any wider. But this black thing fascinated me. It was like a swollen, ebon spider, stretching its fat legs out toward me. Legs? No, they were fingers, talons rather bent for an attack. I saw now that it was a black fist—a glove! After all, nothing more than the glove that had fallen out of the pocket of the overcoat when it slipped off the seat.

"Now there was no mystery about this object any more, yet it held my gaze. My eyes had grown acutely accustomed to the half-light of the compartment so that I noticed distinctly every finger. Every one? No—and it is a marvel that I did not yell in my excitement—the black glove had only four fingers!

"Now I had my man! I could not yet piece together all the details, but I was satisfied that I had landed the murderer. I closed my eyes so as not to be distracted and then began to unravel the mystery. There was no doubt about it that the man had five fingers on his hands, yet his glove had only four!

"Oh, what an idiot was this criminal to leave so large a gap in his net! It was clever enough to force two fingers into the one of the glove and thus give the pursuers a false clue. But why had he not torn it into a thousand pieces or burned it after the deed had been accomplished! How he would curse himself for his stupidity, once I

had landed him! I almost laughed aloud when I realized the stupid blunder made by this son of Satan.

"There lay my fortune an arm's length away. Five per cent. of the contents of those eight packages belonged to me if I succeeded in landing him alive at the next station. And then I thought of you, Richard, and the little wife, whom I could greet, not as a bank clerk out of a situation, but as a man who had earned a quarter of a million by tracking down the greatest thief of the day.

"But did I really have the thief? Were not the chances in favor of his having me? If we were only at the border station! There all passengers would leave the train, and I could simply approach an officer, have the criminal arrested and secure the booty. Then I pondered on the safety of such a proceeding. I, a Prussian, at a strange French railway station, where the officials would be eager enough to clinch the reward for themselves—what chance would I have to prove that I had tracked him? Besides, the fellow was armed and would shoot the first man who laid hands on him. I began to puzzle out what disposition to make of my man. Then I thought of you, Richard!"

"Really! You might have thought of me a bit earlier."

"I was grateful enough to be able to think at all. I determined to get the fellow safely across into Germany, at least to Aix-la-Chapelle. But why there? Why not to Cologne? There I would be met by the cleverest chief of police in Germany. Then we would divide a quarter of a million francs reward between us, and with the little woman here we would go on a pleasure jaunt to Paris. I was already planning what I would do with my share of this fortune when I began to realize the difficulty of getting you to meet me at the railway station at Cologne. By means of a telegram, of course; but how could I get off a message to you without arousing the suspicion of the murderer? How could I get the news to you without letting the telegraph operator into the whole scheme? If the criminal saw me approaching a telegraph booth at the border railway station the whole game was up. He would either make away with me or disappear at some small Belgian station. Besides, the telegram, if sent at all, would have to be sent by a French-speaking operator, as near as possible to the French border, for further east the operators understand a bit of German and might, by some well-meant interpolation, spoil my whole plan. The fear took posses-

sion of me that after all these hours of agony I might yet lose the fruit of my labor.

"I thought it over carefully. Telegraphing was the only means, but the message had to be worded so that only the receiving operator or, better still, you alone, Richard, would know its import. But how could I so express myself that you alone would understand? The address itself was a clue—'Chief of Police'—that was enough to betray me! And yet I had to make it appear so important that you wouldn't think it a joke and fail to meet me.

"How I puzzled over this thing! Never had the wording of so short a message cost a human brain so much anxiety. The express thundered on toward the border. If my message was to be sent from there I would have to have it distinctly formulated before we arrived. The train stopped several minutes at Aulnoye, where a change of cars for Brussels was made. The forward coaches went through to Brussels, those in the rear to Germany. So our coach was shunted back and forth in the yards. Had I pretended sleep any longer it would have impressed my companion suspiciously. So at a particularly hard bump of coupling I started, rubbed my eyes and sat up. I moved toward the window, but the panes were covered with mist on the inside and streaked by rain without. Controlling myself with all my will power I asked calmly: 'Is this the Belgian border, sir? Why don't they open the doors?'

"'No, my dear sir,' he answered most politely, 'this is only Aulnoye. We make two stops more, and than comes Erquelinnes; it is still about fifty minutes from here.'

"'You have learned your guide-book by heart,' I thought, and then said to him: 'I suppose one must get his stuff ready for the customs officials to examine?'

"'Yes; but I hardly think they will ask us to get out.'

"His manner was very calm, almost joyous; of suspicion or anxiety there was no trace in his voice. This was my opportunity for bringing up the subject of my telegram. Pretending to rearrange my pillow I answered, after a slight pause: 'We'll certainly have to get out, for the Belgians are strict customs officials. But I don't mind stepping out, for I have a telegram to send.'

"The word telegram scared him. Like lightning his eyes flashed for a second; I noticed this and continued: 'A telegram to my sister in

Cologne. In the hurry of my departure from Paris I forgot entirely to tell her of my coming. I live with my sister.'

"This seemed to quiet him and he asked sympathetically: 'Will you have time in Erquelinnes to send the telegram?'

" 'Perhaps it would be better to write it in advance and hand it in there.'

"That seemed to please him very much.

" 'My one care is,' I continued, 'that my sister does not understand French, and I fear that the telegraph operator in Erquelinnes doesn't understand German.'

" 'If you write legible German in Latin letters,' he suggested, 'there will be no difficulty. I presume the operator there understands as little German as I do—we French are hopelessly stupid in the matter of foreign languages.'

"God be praised, he understood no German! But was this only a trap for me? Hardly, for his confession of ignorance had the sound of honesty. I hunted in my pocket for a piece of paper, but found nothing that I could use. The letter of dismissal from the bank had a blank sheet, but I feared the man might recognize the seal of the paper.

" 'Are you looking for a sheet of paper for your telegram?'

"He began to hunt for a piece of paper—I begged him not to bother, but he insisted and continued his search. Suddenly it occurred to him: 'Why not take one of the empty pages out of the back of the railway guide?' And with that he tore out two leaves. I thanked him most sincerely. Did anyone ever meet a more polite murderer?

"To rob him of the last trace of suspicion I laid his railway guide on my knee and wrote the message so that he could read it. The address I wrote in particularly large letters while he watched me: 'Mme. Farne, Cologne, Burgmauer 147.' He ceased watching me and began rubbing the vapor from the window-panes. So much the better!

"For Richard—Meet me 5.30, Central Station, Cologne, with two men in civil clothes. Arrest man with whom I shake hands. A matter of life and death. Hans.

"If only you wouldn't take it for a joke! But 'a matter of life and death' does not sound like a joke, and a chief of police is not apt to consider it one. I was sure that you would come.

"Comfortably seated opposite each other we approached the Belgian border. The murderer grew communicative and even witty. Why should he not? Up to this point his plan had succeeded admirably. What the Parisian police had not discovered certainly the Belgian officials would not ferret out. What hellish cleverness that trick with the four-fingered glove had been! I could read in his face his supreme self-satisfaction as he spread his two hands on his knees, each with five healthy fingers.

"The train stopped at two small stations. 'What a superfluous lot of station stops!' The fellow was growing nervous. I stretched out my left foot and pushed the black glove a bit further under the seat. What if he were to discover the glove and believe that I had seen it!

"He began now to chatter again as though he wished to dissipate his anxiety. 'Perhaps they have already caught the thief! We may hear something about it at the border.'

" 'Very likely. Such people are usually very foolish. They go either from Paris to Brussels or some other point in Belgium. And then they are caught like birds in a net.'

" 'And this is a four-fingered criminal too!' With that he laughed loudly. 'A man with four fingers should never risk a robbery.'

" 'But he does not know that his deformity has been noticed.'

" 'But the newspapers! The first thing a criminal does after having accomplished such a deed is to read the papers.'

" 'I am convinced,' I remarked with assurance, 'that the thief is still in Paris, counting his bank-notes and laughing in his sleeve that the police are looking for a four-fingered thief. This whole episode about the smooth-shaven Englishman is too silly for words. Why should just this person be suspected?'

" 'I don't quite understand that either. But finding no other clue, the police are simply following the only one they have. I wish them luck!'

"Then, after a thoughtful silence: 'Are they certain that the robbery was not committed by some of the bank officials? It appears there has been a lot of crooked work there.'

"Then we chatted about various harmless topics until the train slowed up. 'Erquelinnes! All out!' My fellow-traveler allowed me to step out first. I gave my handbag and keys to a porter while I

hurried to the station telegraph office. A sleepy operator was the only one on duty.

" 'Can you take a message in German?' I asked.

" 'Yes, if I can decipher it. I don't understand German, but that is not necessary.'

" 'Are you in direct communication with Cologne?' I asked while he was counting the words.

" 'Direct communication, sir. Six francs twenty centimes—here are three francs eighty centimes change. Good night! We'll get it off at once.'

"I returned to the baggage-room before the customs officials had completed their task. They had not opened my bag at all, and my fellow-traveler was just locking his valise as I entered. Together we went into the shabby lunch-room where each of us ordered a mazagran.

" 'Did you have any trouble with your despatch?' the murderer asked me.

" 'No. Did you with the customs officers?'

" 'Only had to open and close my valise—that was all. But it was a pity that you missed the comical sight of the police official who was sleuthing around counting the fingers on everyone's hands. Suppose some innocent fellow had really been minus a finger! What a merry time he would have had! I hope we will occupy the same compartment again?'

" 'Most assuredly. I have even left my umbrella, cane and hat there —it is a through coach to Cologne.'

" 'Good!' he answered. Then he reached into his overcoat pocket for a match to light his cigarette the waiter had just brought him. He suddenly grew deathly pale and searched anxiously in both pockets.

" 'Did you lose anything?' I asked solicitously.

" 'No—that is—I suppose it is somewhere in the compartment. Did you—did you possibly see it?'

" 'See what?'

" 'I lost a glove.'

" 'As I remember it, you wore no gloves when I first saw you in Paris.'

" 'Yes, I know that. But I had put both gloves in my overcoat pocket, and now one of them is gone. Devil take it!'

"He wanted to go to the compartment immediately, but the door to

the waiting-room was still locked. Fearfully excited, he stamped up and down before the closed door. I grew a bit uncomfortable at the idea of having to occupy the compartment with him again. But it had to be—and besides, why should I fear? He could have no suspicion about me, and once in the compartment he would certainly find his glove again. Under no circumstances was I willing to let him slip through my fingers now.

"As soon as the gate was opened he raced out. It was evident that he wanted to find the glove before I entered the coach. So I decided not to spoil his plan, and as it still lacked five minutes of leaving time, I walked slowly to the end of the platform.

"Passing our compartment I saw him still searching—in the rack, on the floor, under the seats, everywhere save in the right place. Then he found the glove and quickly put it into his coat pocket. He sat moodily trying to recall how the glove could have fallen—then he seemed to find a satisfactory explanation and his features became calm once more.

" 'And now, you scoundrel,' thought I, 'do whatever you like—pack or unpack, it is all the same to me.' I was fearfully tired, my body ached as though some of my bones were broken, and I had not a clear thought in my head. I only realized that I was inexpressibly tired—and then consciousness fled.

"The hours passed, and despite several stops that the train made, I was not once fully awakened. Finally the compartment door was opened rapidly and new warming pans pushed in. An official entered, but neither I nor my traveling companion stirred—the latter seemed also to be slumbering. The official glanced sharply at our hands, then left and closed the door quietly behind him. Through the window at my feet I saw the name of the station: Verviers.

"The thought that in a few minutes we would be on German soil delighted me so that I jumped up. My companion was lying there, his eyes wide open, so I began a conversation with him: 'Have you slept well?'

" 'Excellently! And one need not ask how you slept!'

" 'I never sleep better anywhere than on a train.'

" 'That's a great blessing for a traveler.'

" 'But especially valuable for a writer. Tomorrow, or rather today, I must do a lot of writing.'

" 'About the Paris Exposition?'

" 'I am through with that for the present, but I must write an article about the murder and robbery in the Comptoir d'Escompte.'

" 'What a pity that I can't read German!'

" 'Herbestahl! All change—Customs examination!' The murderer did not understand this command in German, so I translated it for him, and again we went through the formality of the custom house. At the same time the police were watching us very carefully. Once more the train continued on its way and the last act of the drama began. He had to repack his loot into the valise, and for this business there remained two hours' time. I decided to tantalize him a bit, and began a conversation which he tried very hard to discourage. I persisted in talking to him until we reached Aix-la-Chapelle, where again the police examined the passengers.

"Then I threw myself on the seat with my back toward him—there was no need of watching him any more. I heard him turning the leaves of his railway guide. I knew this stretch of line intimately, station for station. There was still ten minutes' time before we reached Stolberg, and I wondered if he would risk repacking in that period. But he did not trust my slumber and decided to wait. Upon entering the train he had laid the valise upon the seat beside him. We passed Stolberg and made a minute's stop at Eschweiler. I seemed to be sleeping as soundly as possible. The train rushed on, and now he seemed quite convinced of the safety of his task. Again I heard the click of the key in the lock and the noise of the seat as it was drawn out. His overcoat brushed my elbow, and I felt the touch of the revolver through the cloth; but I did not stir. Then I heard him lift one package after another out of the hiding-place; I counted them, and then I heard the click as he locked the valise.

" 'Düren! Five minutes' stop!' Day was dawning in the east, sending its first yellow rays through the window. We were but an hour's ride from Cologne. With every minute my impatience grew, while I wondered whether the telegram had really reached you. Suppose you were not at home when it was delivered in the middle of the night! You might have been away on duty! Well, Richard, you know the balance of the story and can finish your report without me."

"But," interjected Evelyn, "I do not know the rest of the tale. All

I know is that Richard was called out early in the morning and said to me as he left: 'A matter of duty; you go on sleeping.' "

"Well," continued Hans, "you should have seen how happily my four-fingered friend left the compartment as the train stopped here. After a rapid glance along the platform, he waited to bid me good-bye. Behind the murderer's back I had winked to Richard to wait a bit. Richard was standing with two brawny fellows just at the door to the cab stand. The four-fingered gentleman had brusquely refused to deliver his valise into the hands of a baggage man; but just at the gateway he put down his valise and motioned to a cab-driver. At this moment I stretched out my hand and said, in French, so loud that Richard could hear it: 'I wish you a happy journey!' And then I turned to Richard and said in German: 'Grab this hound of a murderer!' The two fellows held him as though he were in a vise. Never have I seen such an expression of helpless despair; this lasted a few seconds, and then he began to struggle with such ferocious power that the two men had all they could do to hold him. Richard stepped in front of him and announced: 'You are arrested!'

"Still struggling and livid with rage he yelled at Richard: 'Who are you and what do you want of me? Let me go!'

"Without saying a word I grabbed into the fellow's overcoat pocket and took out his revolver and gloves. Then I addressed him in French: 'Allow me to introduce to you my brother, the chief of police. Thanks to your kindness I was able to telegraph him from Erquelinnes. I hope you have not left any part of the four million francs in the compartment. And if, in the future, you again contemplate doing murder and wish to disguise yourself by means of a four-fingered glove, I would advise you not to let the glove fall on the floor of the railroad carriage.' And with that I held the black glove before his eyes, spreading out its four fingers.

"He threw at me a glance so full of murder that I experienced the same sensation I had had during the night when I fancied I felt his fingers closing about my throat. Then, realizing that neither rage nor cunning could help him, he collapsed and allowed himself to be handcuffed and led away.

"And now I hope you will make a very elaborate report to your minister of police. I drink your health, my dear sister-in-law!"

Hunilla: A Story of the Enchanted Isles

BY HERMAN MELVILLE

(*1819-1891*)

TAKE five-and-twenty heaps of cinders dumped here and there in an outside city lot; imagine some of them magnified into mountains, and the vacant lot the sea; and you will have a fit idea of the general aspect of the Encantadas, or Enchanted Isles. A group rather of extinct volcanoes than of isles; looking much as the world at large might, after a penal conflagration.

It is to be doubted whether any spot of earth can, in desolateness, furnish a parallel to this group. Abandoned cemeteries of long ago, old cities by piecemeal tumbling to their ruin, these are melancholy enough; but, like all else which has but once been associated with humanity, they still awaken in us some thoughts of sympathy, however sad. Hence, even the Dead Sea, along with whatever other emotions it may at times inspire, does not fail to touch in the pilgrim some of his less unpleasurable feelings.

And as for solitariness; the great forests of the north, the expanses of unnavigated waters, the Greenland ice-fields, are the profoundest of solitudes to a human observer; still the magic of their changeable tides and seasons mitigates their terror; because, though unvisited by men, those forests are visited by the May; the remotest seas reflect familiar stars even as Lake Erie does; and in the clear air of a fine Polar day, the irradiated, azure ice shows beautifully as malachite.

But the special curse, as one may call it, of the Encantadas, that which exalts them in desolation above Idumea and the Pole, is, that to them change never comes; neither the change of seasons nor of sorrows. Cut by the Equator, they know not autumn, and they know not spring; while already reduced to the lees of fire, ruin itself can work little more

upon them. The showers refresh the deserts; but in these isles rain never falls. Like split Syrian gourds left withering in the sun, they are cracked by an everlasting drought beneath a torrid sky. "Have mercy upon me," the wailing spirit of the Encantadas seems to cry, "and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame."

Another feature in these isles is their emphatic uninhabitableness. It is deemed a fit type of all-forsaken overthrow, that the jackal should den in the wastes of weedy Babylon; but the Encantadas refuse to harbour even the outcasts of the beasts. Man and wolf alike disown them. Little but reptile life is here found: tortoises, lizards, immense spiders, snakes, and that strangest anomaly of outlandish nature, the *aguano*. No voice, no low, no howl is heard; the chief sound of life here is a hiss.

On most of the isles where vegetation is found at all, it is more ungrateful than the blankness of Aracama. Tangled thickets of wiry bushes, without fruit and without a name, springing up among deep fissures of calcined rock, and treacherously masking them; or a parched growth of distorted cactus trees.

In many places the coast is rock-bound, or, more properly, clinker-bound; tumbled masses of blackish or greenish stuff like the dross of an iron-furnace, forming dark clefts and caves here and there, into which a ceaseless sea pours a fury of foam; overhanging them with a swirl of gray, haggard mist, amidst which sail screaming flights of unearthly birds heightening the dismal din. However calm the sea without, there is no rest for those swells and those rocks; they lash and are lashed, even when the outer ocean is most at peace with itself. On the oppressive, clouded days, such as are peculiar to this part of the watery Equator, the dark, vitrified masses, many of which raise themselves among white whirlpools and breakers in detached and perilous places off the shore, present a most Plutonian sight. In no world but a fallen one could such lands exist.

. . . . . .

Far to the north-east of Charles's Isle, sequestered from the rest, lies Norfolk Isle; and, however insignificant to most voyagers, to me, through sympathy, that lone island has become a spot made sacred by the strangest trials of humanity.

It was my first visit to the Encantadas. Two days had been spent

ashore in hunting tortoises. There was not time to capture many; so on the third afternoon we loosed our sails. We were just in the act of getting under way, the uprooted anchor yet suspended and invisibly swaying beneath the wave, as the good ship gradually turned her heel to leave the isle behind, when the seaman who heaved with me at the windlass paused suddenly, and directed my attention to something moving on the land, not along the beach, but somewhat back, fluttering from a height.

In view of the sequel of this little story, be it here narrated how it came to pass, that an object which partly from its being so small was quite lost to every other man on board, still caught the eye of my handspike companion. The rest of the crew, myself included, merely stood up to our spikes in heaving, whereas, unwontedly exhilarated, at every turn of the ponderous windlass, my belted comrade leaped atop of it, with might and main giving a downward, thewey, perpendicular heave, his raised eye bent in cheery animation upon the slowly receding shore. Being high lifted above all others was the reason he perceived the object, otherwise unperceivable; and this elevation of his eye was owing to the elevation of his spirits; and this again—for truth must out—to a dram of Peruvian Pisco, in guerdon for some kindness done, secretly administered to him that morning by our mulatto steward. Now, certainly, Pisco does a deal of mischief in the world; yet seeing that, in the present case, it was the means, though indirect, of rescuing a human being from the most dreadful fate, must we not also needs admit that sometimes Pisco does a deal of good?

Glancing across the water in the direction pointed out, I saw some white thing hanging from an inland rock, perhaps half a mile from the sea.

"It is a bird; a white-winged bird; perhaps a—no; it is—it is a handkerchief!"

"Ay, a handkerchief!" echoed my comrade, and with a louder shout apprised the captain.

Quickly now—like the running out and training of a great gun—the long cabin spy-glass was thrust through the mizzen-rigging from the high platform of the poop; whereupon a human figure was plainly seen upon the inland rock, eagerly waving toward us what seemed to be the handkerchief.

Our captain was a prompt, good fellow. Dropping the glass, he

lustily ran forward, ordering the anchor to be dropped again; hands to stand by a boat, and lower away.

In a half-hour's time the swift boat returned. It went with six and came with seven; and the seventh was a woman.

It is not artistic heartlessness, but I wish I could but draw in crayons; for this woman was a most touching sight; and crayons, tracing softly melancholy lines, would best depict the mournful image of the dark-damasked Chola widow.

Her story was soon told, and though given in her own strange language was as quickly understood; for our captain, from long trading on the Chilian coast, was well versed in the Spanish. A Cholo, or half-breed Indian woman of Payta in Peru, three years gone by, with her young new-wedded husband Felipe, of pure Castilian blood, and her one only Indian brother, Truxill, Hunilla had taken passage on the main in a French whaler, commanded by a joyous man; which vessel, bound to the cruising-grounds beyond the Enchanted Isles, proposed passing close by their vicinity. The object of the little party was to procure tortoise oil, a fluid which for its great purity and delicacy is held in high estimation wherever known; and it is well known all along this part of the Pacific coast. With a chest of clothes, tools, cooking utensils, a rude apparatus for trying out the oil, some casks of biscuit, and other things, not omitting two favourite dogs, of which faithful animal all the Cholos are very fond, Hunilla and her companions were safely landed at their chosen place; the Frenchman, according to the contract made ere sailing, engaged to take them off upon returning from a four months' cruise in the westward seas; which interval the three adventurers deemed quite sufficient for their purposes.

On the isle's lone beach they paid him in silver for their passage out, the stranger having declined to carry them at all except upon that condition; though willing to take every means to ensure the due fulfillment of his promise. Felipe had striven hard to have this payment put off to the period of the ship's return. But in vain. Still they thought they had, in another way, ample pledge of the good faith of the Frenchman. It was arranged that the expenses of the passage home should not be payable in silver, but in tortoises; one hundred tortoises ready captured to the returning captain's hand. These the Cholos meant to secure after their own work was done, against the probable time of the Frenchman's coming back; and no doubt in prospect al-

ready felt, that in those hundred tortoises—now somewhere ranging the isle's interior—they possessed one hundred hostages. Enough: the vessel sailed; the gazing three on shore answered the loud glee of the singing crew; and ere evening, the French craft was hull down in the distant sea, its masts three faintest lines which quickly faded from Hunilla's eye.

The stranger had given a blithesome promise, and anchored it with oaths; but oaths and anchors equally will drag; naught else abides on fickle earth but unkept promises of joy. Contrary winds from out unstable skies, or contrary moods of his more varying mind, or shipwreck and sudden death in solitary waves; whatever was the cause, the blithe stranger never was seen again.

Yet, however dire a calamity was here in store, misgivings of it ere due time never disturbed the Cholos' busy mind, now all intent upon the toilsome matter which had brought them hither. Nay, by swift doom coming like a thief at night, ere seven weeks went by, two of the little party were removed from all anxieties of land or sea. No more they sought to gaze with feverish fear, or still more feverish hope, beyond the present's horizon line; but into the furthest future their own silent spirits sailed. By persevering labour beneath that burning sun, Felipe and Truxill had brought down to their hut many scores of tortoises, and tried out the oil, when, elated with their good success, and to reward themselves for such hard work, they, too hastily, made a catamaran, or Indian raft, much used on the Spanish main, and merrily started on a fishing trip, just without a long reef with many jagged gaps, running parallel with the shore, about half a mile from it. By some bad tide or hap, or natural negligence of joyfulness (for though they could not be heard, yet by their gestures they seemed singing at the time) forced in deep water against that iron bar, the ill-made catamaran was overset, and came all to pieces; when dashed by broad-chested swells between their broken logs and the sharp teeth of the reef, both adventurers perished before Hunilla's eyes.

Before Hunilla's eyes they sank. The real woe of this event passed before her sight as some sham tragedy on the stage. She was seated on a rude bower among the withered thickets, crowning a lofty cliff, a little back from the beach. The thickets were so disposed, that in looking upon the sea at large she peered out from among the branches as from the lattice of a high balcony. But upon the day we speak of

here, the better to watch the adventure of those two hearts she loved, Hunilla had withdrawn the branches to one side, and held them so. They formed an oval frame, through which the bluely boundless sea rolled like a painted one. And there, the invisible painter painted to her view the wave-tossed and disjointed raft, its once level logs slantingly upheaved, as raking masts, and the four struggling arms undistinguishable among them; and then all subsided into smooth-flowing creamy waters, slowly drifting the splintered wreck; while first and last, no sound of any sort was heard. Death in a silent picture; a dream of the eye; such vanishing shapes as the mirage shows.

So instant was the scene, so trance-like its mild pictorial effect, so distant from her blasted bower and her common sense of things, that Hunilla gazed and gazed, nor raised a finger or a wail. But as good to sit thus dumb, in stupor staring on that dumb show, for all that otherwise might be done. With half a mile of sea between, how could her two enchanted arms aid those four fated ones? The distance long, the time one sand. After the lightning is beheld, what fool shall stay the thunder-bolt? Felipe's body was washed ashore, but Truxill's never came; only his gay, braided hat of golden straw—that same sunflower thing he waved to her, pushing from the strand—and now, to the last gallant, it still saluted her. But Felipe's body floated to the marge, with one arm encirclingly outstretched. Lock-jawed in grim death, the lover husband softly clasped his bride, true to her even in death's dream. Ah, heaven, when man thus keeps his faith, wilt thou be faithless who created the faithful one? But they cannot break faith who never plighted it.

It needs not to be said what nameless misery now wrapped the lonely widow. In telling her own story she passed this almost entirely over, simply recounting the event. Construe the comment of her features as you might, from her mere words little would you have weened that Hunilla was herself the heroine of her tale. But not thus did she defraud us of our tears. All hearts bled that grief could be so brave.

She but showed us her soul's lid, and the strange ciphers thereon engraved; all within, with pride's timidity, was withheld. Yet was there one exception. Holding out her small olive hand before our captain, she said in mild and slowest Spanish, "Señor, I buried him"; then paused, struggled as against the writhed coilings of a snake, and cring-

ing suddenly, leaped up, repeating in impassioned pain, "I buried him, my life, my soul!"

Doubtless, it was by half-conscious, automatic motions of her hands, that this heavy-hearted one performed the final office for Felipe, and planted a rude cross of withered sticks—no green ones might be had—at the head of that lonely grave, where rested now in lasting uncomplaint and quiet haven he whom untranquil seas had overthrown.

But some dull sense of another body that should be interred, of another cross that should hallow another grave—unmade as yet—some dull anxiety and pain touching her undiscovered brother, now haunted the oppressed Hunilla. Her hands fresh from the burial earth, she slowly went back to the beach, with unshaped purposes wandering there, her spell-bound eye bent upon the incessant waves. But they bore nothing to her but a dirge, which maddened her to think that murderers should mourn. As time went by, and these things came less dreamingly to her mind, the strong persuasions of her Romish faith, which sets peculiar store by consecrated urns, prompted her to resume in waking earnest that pious search which had but been begun as in somnambulism. Day after day, week after week, she trod the cindery beach, till at length a double motive edged every eager glance. With equal longing she now looked for the living and the dead; the brother and the captain; alike vanished, never to return. Little accurate note of time had Hunilla taken under such emotions as were hers, and little, outside herself, served for calendar or dial. As to poor Crusoe in the self-same sea, no saint's bell pealed forth the lapse of week or month; each day went by unchallenged; no chanticleer announced those sultry dawns, no lowing herds those poisonous nights. All wonted and steadily recurring sounds, human, or humanised by sweet fellowship with man, but one stirred that torrid trance—the cry of dogs; save which naught but the rolling sea invaded it, an all-pervading monotone; and to the widow that was the least loved voice she could have heard.

No wonder, that as her thoughts now wandered to the unreturning ship, and were beaten back again, the hope against hope so struggled in her soul, that at length she desperately said, "Not yet, not yet; my foolish heart runs on too fast." So she forced patience for some further weeks. But to those whom earth's sure indraft draws, patience or impatience is still the same.

Hunilla now sought to settle precisely in her mind, to an hour, how

long it was since the ship had sailed; and then, with the same precision, how long a space remained to pass. But this proved impossible. What present day or month it was she could not say. Time was her labyrinth, in which Hunilla was entirely lost.

And now follows—

Against my own purposes a pause descends upon me here. One knows not whether nature doth not impose some secrecy upon him who has been privy to certain things. At least, it is to be doubted whether it be good to blazon such. If some books are deemed most baneful and their sale forbid, how, then, with deadlier facts, not dreams of doting men? Those whom books will hurt will not be proof against events. Events, not books, should be forbid. But in all things man sows upon the wind, which bloweth just there whither it listeth; for ill or good, man cannot know. Often ill comes from the good, as good from ill.

When Hunilla—

Dire sight it is to see some silken beast long dally with a golden lizard ere she devour. More terrible, to see how feline Fate will sometimes dally with a human soul, and by a nameless magic make it repulse a sane despair with a hope which is but mad. Unwittingly I imp this cat-like thing, sporting with the heart of him who reads; for if he feel not he reads in vain.

—"The ship sails this day, today," at last said Hunilla to herself; "this gives me certain time to stand on; without certainty I go mad. In loose ignorance I have hoped and hoped; now in firm knowledge I will but wait. Now I live and no longer perish in bewilderings. Holy Virgin, aid me! Thou wilt waft back the ship. Oh, past length of weary weeks—all to be dragged over—to buy the certainty of today, I freely give ye, though I tear ye from me!"

As mariners, tossed in tempest on some desolate ledge, patch them a boat out of the remnants of their vessel's wreck, and launch it in the self-same waves, see here Hunilla, this lone ship-wrecked soul, out of treachery invoking trust. Humanity, thou strong thing, I worship thee, not in the laurelled victor, but in this vanquished one.

Truly Hunilla leaned upon a reed, a real one; no metaphor; a real Eastern reed. A piece of hollow cane, drifted from unknown isles, and found upon the beach, its once jagged ends rubbed smoothly even as by sandpaper; its golden glazing gone. Long ground between the sea and land, upper and nether stone, the unvarnished substance was filed

bare, and wore another polish now, one with itself, the polish of its agony. Circular lines at intervals cut all round this surface, divided it into six panels of unequal length. In the first were scored the days, each tenth one marked by a longer and deeper notch; the second was scored for the number of sea-fowl eggs for sustenance, picked out from the rocky nests; the third, how many fish had been caught from the shore; the fourth, how many small tortoises found inland; the fifth, how many days of sun; the sixth, of clouds; which last, of the two, was the greater one. Long night of busy numbering, misery's mathematics, to weary her too-wakeful soul to sleep; yet sleep for that was none.

The panel of the days was deeply worn—the long tenth notches half effaced, as alphabets of the blind. Ten thousand times the longing widow had traced her finger over the bamboo—dull flute, which played on, gave no sound—as if counting birds flown by in air would hasten tortoises creeping through the woods.

After the one hundred and eightieth day no further mark was seen; that last one was the faintest, as the first the deepest.

"There were more days," said our captain; "many, many more; why did you not go on and notch them, too, Hunilla?"

"Señor, ask me not."

"And meantime, did no other vessel pass the isle?"

"Nay, señor;—but—"

"You do not speak; but *what*, Hunilla?"

"Ask me not, señor."

"You saw ships pass, far away; you waved to them; they passed on; —was that it, Hunilla?"

"Señor, be it as you say."

Braced against her woe, Hunilla would not, durst not trust the weakness of her tongue. Then when our captain asked whether any whaleboats had—

But no, I will not file this thing complete for scoffing souls to quote, and call it firm proof upon their side. The half shall here remain untold. Those two unnamed events which befell Hunilla on this isle, let them abide between her and her God. In nature, as in law, it may be libellous to speak some truths.

Still, how it was that, although our vessel had lain three days anchored nigh the isle, its one human tenant should not have dis-

covered us till just upon the point of sailing, never to revisit so lone and far a spot, this needs explaining ere the sequel come.

The place where the French captain had landed the little party was on the further and opposite end of the isle. There, too, it was that they had afterward built their hut. Nor did the widow in her solitude desert the spot where her loved ones had dwelt with her, and where the dearest of the twain now slept his last long sleep, and all her plaints awaked him not, and he of husbands the most faithful during life.

Now, high broken land rises between the opposite extremities of the isle. A ship anchored at one side is invisible from the other. Neither is the isle so small, but a considerable company might wander for days through the wilderness of one side, and never be seen, or their halloos heard, by any stranger holding aloof on the other. Hence Hunilla, who naturally associated the possible coming of ships with her own part of the isle, might to the end have remained quite ignorant of the presence of our vessel, were it not for a mysterious presentiment, borne to her, so our mariners averred, by this isle's enchanted air. Nor did the widow's answer undo the thought.

"How did you come to cross the isle this morning, then, Hunilla?" said our captain.

"Señor, something came flitting by me. It touched my cheek, my heart, señor."

"What do you say, Hunilla?"

"I have said, señor, something came through the air."

It was a narrow chance. For when in crossing the isle Hunilla gained the high land in the centre, she must then for the first have perceived our masts, and also marked that their sails were being loosed, perhaps even heard the echoing chorus of the windlass song. The strange ship was about to sail, and she behind. With all haste she now descends the height on the hither side, but soon loses sight of the ship among the sunken jungles at the mountain's base. She struggles on through the withered branches, which seek at every step to bar her path, till she comes to the isolated rock, still some way from the water. This she climbs, to reassure herself. The ship is still in plainest sight. But now, worn out with over-tension, Hunilla all but faints; she fears to step down from her giddy perch; she is fain to pause, there where she is, and as a last resort catches the turban from her head, unfurls and waves it over the jungles toward us.

During the telling of her story the mariners formed a voiceless circle round Hunilla and the captain; and when at length the word was given to man the fastest boat, and pull round to the isle's thither side, to bring away Hunilla's chest and the tortoise-oil, such alacrity of both cheery and sad obedience seldom before was seen. Little ado was made. Already the anchor had been recommitted to the bottom, and the ship swung calmly to it.

But Hunilla insisted upon accompanying the boat as indispensable pilot to her hidden hut. So being refreshed with the best the steward could supply, she started with us. Nor did ever any wife of the most famous admiral, in her husband's barge, receive more silent reverence of respect than poor Hunilla from this boat's crew.

Rounding many a vitreous cape and bluff, in two hours' time we shot inside the fatal reef; wound into a secret cove, looked up along a green many-gabled lava wall, and saw the island's solitary dwelling.

It hung upon an impending cliff, sheltered on two sides by tangled thickets, and half screened from view in front by juttings of the rude stairway, which climbed the precipice from the sea. Built of canes, it was thatched with long, mildewed grass. It seemed an abandoned hay-rick, whose haymakers were now no more. The roof inclined but one way; the eaves coming to within two feet of the ground. And here was a simple apparatus to collect the dews, or rather doubly distilled and finest winnowed rains, which, in mercy or in mockery, the night-skies sometimes drop upon these blighted Encantadas. All along beneath the eaves, a spotted sheet, quite weather-stained, was spread, pinned to short, upright stakes, set in the shallow sand. A small clinker, thrown into the cloth, weighed its middle down, thereby straining all moisture into a calabash placed below. This vessel supplied each drop of water ever drunk upon the isle by the Cholos. Hunilla told us the calabash would sometimes, but not often, be half filled overnight. It held six quarts, perhaps. "But," said she, "we were used to thirst. At sandy Payta, where I live, no shower from heaven ever fell; all the water there is brought on mules from the inland vales."

Tied among the thickets were some twenty moaning tortoises, supplying Hunilla's lonely larder; while hundreds of vast tableted black bucklers, like displaced, shattered tombstones of dark slate, were also scattered round. These were the skeleton backs of those great tortoises from which Felipe and Truxill had made their precious oil. Several

large calabashes and two goodly kegs were filled with it. In a pot near by were the caked crusts of a quantity which had been permitted to evaporate. "They meant to have strained it off next day," said Hunilla, as she turned aside.

I forgot to mention the most singular sight of all, though the first that greeted us after landing.

Some ten small, soft-haired, ringleted dogs, of a beautiful breed, peculiar to Peru, set up a concert of glad welcomings when we gained the beach, which was responded to by Hunilla. Some of these dogs had, since her widowhood, been born upon the isle, the progeny of the two brought from Payta. Owing to the jagged steeps and pitfalls, tortuous thickets, sunken clefts, and perilous intricacies of all sorts in the interior, Hunilla, admonished by the loss of one favourite among them, never allowed these delicate creatures to follow her in her occasional birds'-nests climbs and other wanderings; so that, through long habituation, they offered not to follow, when that morning she crossed the land, and her own soul was then too full of other things to heed their lingering behind. Yet, all along she had so clung to them, that, besides what moisture they lapped up at early daybreak from the small scoop-holes among the adjacent rocks, she had shared the dew of her calabash among them; never laying by any considerable store against those prolonged and utter droughts which, in some disastrous seasons, warp these isles.

Having pointed out, at our desire, what few things she would like transported to the ship—her chest, the oil, not omitting the live tortoises which she intended for a grateful present to our captain—we immediately set to work, carrying them to the boat down the long, sloping stair of deeply shadowed rock. While my comrades were thus employed, I looked and Hunilla had disappeared.

It was not curiosity alone, but, it seems to me, something different mingled with it, which prompted me to drop my tortoise, and once more gaze slowly around. I remembered the husband buried by Hunilla's hands. A narrow pathway led into a dense part of the thickets. Following it through many mazes, I came out upon a small, round, open space, deeply chambered there.

The mound rose in the middle; a bare heap of finest sand, like that unverdured heap found at the bottom of an hour-glass run out. At its head stood the cross of withered sticks; the dry, peeled bark still fray-

ing from it; its transverse limb tied up with rope, and forlornly adroop in the silent air.

Hunilla was partly prostrate upon the grave; her dark head bowed, and lost in her long, loosened Indian hair; her hands extended to the cross-foot, with a little brass crucifix clasped between; a crucifix worn featureless, like an ancient graven knocker long plied in vain. She did not see me, and I made no noise, but slid aside, and left the spot.

A few moments ere all was ready for our going, she reappeared among us. I looked into her eyes, but saw no tear. There was something which seemed strangely haughty in her air, and yet it was the air of woe. A Spanish and an Indian grief, which would not visibly lament. Pride's height in vain abased to proneness on the rack; nature's pride subduing nature's torture.

Like pages the small and silken dogs surrounded her, as she slowly descended toward the beach. She caught the two most eager creatures in her arms:—"Mia Teeta! Mia Tomoteeta!" and fondling them, inquired how many could we take on board.

The mate commanded the boat's crew; not a hard-hearted man, but his way of life had been such that in most things, even in the smallest, simple utility was his leading motive.

"We cannot take them all, Hunilla; our supplies are short; the winds are unreliable; we may be a good many days going to Tombez. So take those you have, Hunilla; but no more."

She was in the boat; the oarsmen, too, were seated; all save one, who stood ready to push off and then spring himself. With the sagacity of their race, the dogs now seemed aware that they were in the very instant of being deserted upon a barren strand. The gunwales of the boat were high; its prow—presented inland—was lifted; so owing to the water, which they seemed instinctively to shun, the dogs could not well leap into the little craft. But their busy paws hard scraped the prow, as it had been some farmer's door shutting them out from shelter in a winter storm. A clamorous agony of alarm. They did not howl, or whine; they all but spoke.

"Push off! Give way!" cried the mate. The boat gave one heavy drag and lurch, and next moment shot swiftly from the beach, turned on her heel, and sped. The dogs ran howling along the water's marge; now pausing to gaze at the flying boat, then motioning as if to leap in chase, but mysteriously withheld themselves; and again ran howling

along the beach. Had they been human beings hardly would they have more vividly inspired the sense of desolation. The oars were plied as confederate feathers of two wings. No one spoke. I looked back upon the beach, and then upon Hunilla, but her face was set in a stern dusky calm. The dogs crouching in her lap vainly licked her rigid hands. She never looked behind her; but sat motionless, till we turned a promontory of the coast and lost all sights and sounds astern. She seemed as one who, having experienced the sharpest of mortal pangs, was henceforth content to have all lesser heartstrings riven, one by one. To Hunilla, pain seemed so necessary, that pain in other beings, though by love and sympathy made her own, was unrepiningly to be borne. A heart of yearning in a frame of steel. A heart of earthly yearning, frozen by the frost which falleth from the sky.

The sequel is soon told. After a long passage, vexed by calms and baffling winds, we made the little port of Tombez in Peru, there to recruit the ship. Payta was not very distant. Our captain sold the tortoise oil to a Tombez merchant; and adding to the silver a contribution from all hands, gave it to our silent passenger, who knew not what the mariners had done.

The last seen of lone Hunilla she was passing into Payta town, riding upon a small gray ass; and before her on the ass's shoulders, she eyed the jointed workings of the beast's armorial cross.

The Prisoner of Assiout

BY GRANT ALLEN

(*1848-1899*)

It was a sultry December day at Medinet Habu. Gray haze spread dim over the rocks in the desert. The arid red mountains twinkled and winked through the heated air. I was weary with climbing the great dry ridge from the Tombs of the Kings. I sat on the broken arm of a shattered granite Rameses. My legs dangled over the side of that colossal fragment. In front of me vast colonnades stood out clear and distinct against the hot, white sky. Beyond lay bare hills; in the distance, to the left, the muddy Nile, amid green fields, gleamed like a thin silver thread in the sunlight.

A native, in a single dirty garment, sat sunning himself on a headless sphinx hard by. He was carving a watermelon with his knife—thick, red, ripe, juicy. I eyed it hard. With a gesture of Oriental politeness, he offered me a slice. It was too tempting to refuse, that baking hot day, in that rainless land, though I knew acceptance meant ten times its worth in the end in bakshish.

"Arabi?" I asked inquiringly of my Egyptian friend, which is, being interpreted, "Are you a Mussulman?"

He shook his head firmly, and pointed with many nods to the tiny blue cross tattooed on his left wrist. "Nusráni," he answered, with a look of some pride. I smiled my acquiescence. He was a Nazarene, a Christian.

In a few minutes' time we had fallen into close talk of Egypt, past and present; the bad old days; the British occupation; the effect of strong government on the condition of fellahin. To the Christian population of the Nile valley, of course, the advent of the English has been a social revolution. For ages downtrodden, oppressed, despised, these Coptic schismatics at last find themselves suddenly, in the ends of the earth, co-religionists with the new ruling class in the country, and

able to boast themselves in many ways over their old Moslem masters.

I speak but little colloquial Arabic myself, though I understand it with ease when it is spoken, so the conversation between us was necessarily somewhat one-sided. But my Egyptian friend soon grew voluble enough for two, and the sight of the piastres laid in his dusky palm loosed the strings of his tongue to such an alarming extent that I began to wonder before long whether I should ever get back again to the Luxor Hotel in time for dinner.

"Ah, yes, excellency," my Copt said slowly, when I asked him at last about the administration of justice under Ismail's rule, "things were different then, before the English came, as Allah willed it. It was stick, stick, stick every month of the year. No prayers availed; we were beaten for everything. If a fellah didn't pay his taxes when crops were bad, he was lashed till he found them; if he was a Christian, and offended the least Moslem official, he was stripped to the skin, and ruthlessly bastinadoed. And then, for any insubordination, it was death outright—hanging or beheading, slash, so, with a simitar." And my companion brought his hand round in a whirl with swishing force, as if he were decapitating some unseen criminal on the bare sand before him.

"The innocent must often have been punished with the guilty," I remarked, in my best Arabic, looking vaguely across at him.

"Ah, yes," he assented, smiling. "So Allah ordained. But sometimes, even then, the saints were kind; we got off unexpectedly. I could tell you a strange story that once happened to myself." His eyes twinkled hard. "It was a curious adventure," he went on; "the effendi might like, perhaps, to hear it. I was condemned to death, and all but executed. It shows the wonderful ways of Allah."

These Coptic Christians, indeed, speaking Arabic as they do, and living so constantly among a Mussulman population, have imbibed many Mahomedan traits of thought, besides the mere accident of language, such as speaking of the Christian God as Allah. Fatalism has taken as strong a hold of their minds as of Islam itself. "Say on," I answered lightly, drawing a cigarette from my case. "A story is always of interest to me, my friend. It brings grist to the mill. I am a man of the pen. I write down in books all the strange things that are told me."

My Egyptian smiled again. "Then this tale of mine," he said, show-

ing all his white teeth, and brushing away the flies from his sore eye as he spoke, "should be worth you money, for it's as strange as any of the Thousand and One Nights men tell for hire at Cairo. It happened to me near Assiout, in Ismail's days. I was a bold young man then—too bold for Egypt. My father had a piece of ground by the river side that was afterward taken from us by Ismail for the Daira.

"In our village lived a Sheikh, a very hard man; a Mussulman, an Arab, a descendant of the Prophet. He was the greatest Sheikh for miles and miles around. He had a large white house, with green blinds to the windows, while all the rest of us in his government lived in mud-built huts, round and low like beehives. He had date palms, very many, and doums, and doura patches. Camels were his, and buffaloes and asses, and cows; 'twas a very rich man; oh, so rich and powerful. When he went forth to town he rode on a great white mule. And he had a harem, too; three wives of his own, who were beautiful as the day—so girls who had seen them said, for as for us, we saw them not—plump women every one of them, as the Khedive's at Cairo, with eyes like a gazelle's, marked round with kohl, and their nails stained red every day with henna. All the world said the Sheikh was a happy man, for he had the finest dates of the country to eat, and servants and camels in plenty to do his bidding.

"Now, there was a girl in our village, a Nusráni like me, a beautiful young girl; and her name was Laila. Her eyes were like those of that child there—Zanobi—who carries the effendi's water-gourd on her head, and her cheeks were round and soft as a grape after the inundation. I meant to wed her; and she liked me well. In the evening we sat and talked together under the whispering palm-trees. But when the time drew near for me to marry her, and I had arranged with her parents, there came a message from the Sheikh. He had seen the girl by the river as she went down to draw water with her face unveiled, and though she was a Nusráni, she fired his soul, and he wished to take her away from me to put her into his harem.

"When I heard that word I tore my clothes in my rage, and, all Christian that I was, and of no account with the Moslems, I went up to the Sheikh's house in a very white anger, and I fell on my face and asked leave to see him.

"The Sheikh sat in his courtyard, inside his house, and gave audience to all men, after the fashion of Islam. I entered and spoke to him.

'O, Sheikh,' I said boldly, 'Allah and the Khedive have prospered you with exceeding great prosperity. You have oxen and asses, buffaloes and camels, men-servants and maid-servants, much millet and cotton and corn and sugar-cane; you drink Frank wine every day of your life, and eat the fat of the land; and your harem is full of beautiful women. Now in the village where I live is a Nusráni girl, whose name is Laila. Her eyes are bright toward mine, and I love her as the thirsty land loves water. Yet, hear, O Sheikh; word is brought me now that you wish to take this girl, who is mine; and I come to plead with you today as Nathan the Prophet pleaded with David, the King of the Beni Israel. If you take away from me my Laila, my one ewe lamb—'

"But, at the word, the Sheikh rose up, and clenched his fist, and was very angry. 'Who is this dog,' he asked, 'that he should dare to dictate to me?' He called to his slaves that waited on his nod. 'Take this fellow,' he cried in his anger, 'and tie him hand and foot, and flog him as I bid on his naked back, that he may know, being a Christian, an infidel dog, not to meddle with the domestic affairs of Moslems. It were well he were made acquainted with his own vileness by the instrumentality of a hundred lashes. And go tomorrow and bring Laila to me, and take care that this Copt shall never again set eyes on her!'

"Well, effendi, at the words, three strong Arabs seized me—fierce sons of the desert—and bound me hand and foot, and beat me with a hundred lashes of the kurbash till my soul was sick and faint within me. I swooned with the disgrace and with the severity of the blows. And I was young in those days. And I was very angry.

"That night I went home to my own mud hut, with black blood in my heart, and took counsel with my brother Sirgeh how I should avenge this insult. But first I sent word by my brother to Laila's hut that Laila's father should bring her to meet us in the dusk, in very great secrecy, by the bank of the river. In the gray twilight she came down. A dahabiah was passing, and in it was a foreigner, a very great prince, an American prince of great wealth and wisdom. I remember his name even. Perhaps the effendi knows him. He was Cyrus P. Quackenboss, and he came from Cincinnati."

"I have not the honor," I answered, smiling at this very unexpected Western intrusion.

"Well, anyhow," my Copt continued, unheeding my smile, "we hailed the dahabiah, and made the American prince understand how the matter

stood. He was very kind. We were brother Christians. He took Laila on board, and promised to deliver her safe to her aunt at Karnak, so that the Sheikh might not know where the girl was gone, nor send to fetch her. And the counsel I took next with my brother was this: In the dead of night I rose up from my hut, and put a mask of white linen over the whole of my face to conceal my features, and stole out alone, with a thick stick in my hands, and went to the Sheikh's house, down by the bank of the river. As I went, the jackals prowled around the village for food, and the owls from the tombs flitted high in the moonlight.

"I broke into the Sheikh's room by the flat-roofed out-house that led to his window, and I locked the door; and there, before the Sheikh could rouse his household, I beat him, blow for blow, within an inch of his life, in revenge for my own beating, and because of his injustice in trying to take my Laila from me. The Sheikh was a powerful man, with muscles like iron, and he grappled me hard, and tried to wrench the stick from me, and bruised me about the body by flinging me on the ground; and I was weak with my beating, and very sore all over. But still, being by nature a strong young man, very fierce with anger, I fought him hard, and got him under in the end, and thwacked him till he was as black and blue as I myself was, one mass of bruises from head to foot with my cudgeling. Then, just as his people succeeded in forcing the door, I jumped out of the window upon the flat-roofed out-house, and leaped lightly to the ground and darted like a jackal across the open cotton-fields and between the plots of doura to my own little hut on the outskirts of the village. I reached there panting, and I knew the Sheikh would kill me for my daring.

"Next morning, early, the Sheikh sent to arrest me. He was blind with rage and with the effect of the blows: his face was livid, and his cheeks purple. 'By the beard of the Prophet, Athanasio,' he said to me, hitting me hard on the cheek—my name is Athanasio, effendi, after our great patriarch—'your blood shall flow for this, you dog of a Christian. You dare to assault the wearer of a green turban, a prince in Islam, a descendant of the Prophet! You shall suffer for it, you cur! Your base blood shall flow for it!'

"I cast myself down, like a slave, on the ground before him—though I hated him like sin: for it is well to abase one's self in due time before the face of authority. Besides, by that time, Laila was safe,

and that was all I cared about. 'Suffer for what, O my Sheikh?' I cried, as though I knew not what he meant. 'What have I done to your Excellency? Who has told you evil words concerning your poor servant? Who has slandered me to my lord, that he is so angry against me?'

"'Take him away!' roared the Sheikh to the three strong Arabs. 'Carry him off to be tried before the Cadi at Assiout.'

"For even in Ismail's days, you see, effendi, before the English came, the Sheikh himself would not have dared to put me to death untried. The power of life and death lay with the Cadi at Assiout.

"So they took me to Assiout, into the mosque of Ali, where the Cadi sat at the seat of judgment and arraigned me before him a week later. There the Sheikh appeared, and bore witness against me. Those who spoke for me pleaded that, as the Sheikh himself admitted, the man who broke into his room, and banged him so hard, had his face covered with a linen cloth; how, then, could the Sheikh, in the hurry and the darkness, be sure he recognized me? Perhaps it was some other who took this means to ruin me. But the Sheikh, for his part swore by Allah, and by the Holy Stone of the Kaaba at Mecca, that he saw me distinctly, and knew it was I. The moonlight through the window revealed my form to him. And who else in the village but me had a grudge against his justice?

"The Cadi was convinced. The Cadi gave judgment. I was guilty of rebellion against the Sheikh and against ul-Islam; and, being a dog of a Christian, unworthy even to live, his judgment was that after three days' time I should be beheaded in the prison court of Assiout.

"You may guess, effendi, whether or not I was anxious. But Laila was safe; and to save my girl from that wretch's harem I was ready, for my part, to endure anything.

"Two nights long I lay awake and thought strange things by myself in the whitewashed cells of the jail at Assiout. The governor of the prison, who was a European—an Italian, he called himself—and a Christian of Roum, of those who obey the Pope, was very kind indeed to me. He knew me before (for I had worked in his fields), and was sorry when I told him the tale about Laila. But what would you have? Those were Ismail's days. It was the law of Islam. He could not prevent it.

"On the third evening, my brother came round to the prison to see

me. He came with many tears in his eyes, bringing evil tidings. My poor old father, he said, was dying at home with grief. They didn't expect he would live till morning. And Laila, too, had stolen back from Karnak unperceived, and was hiding in the village. She wished to see me just once before I died. But if she came to the prison, the Sheikh would find her out, and carry her off in triumph to his own harem.

"Would the governor give me leave to go home just that one night, to bid farewell to Laila and to my dying father?

"Now, the governor, Excellency, was a very humane man. And though he was a Christian of Roum, not a Copt like us, he was kind to the Copts as his brother Christians. He pondered awhile to himself, and roped his mustache thus; then he said to me:

"Athanasio, you are an honest man; the execution is fixed for eight by the clock tomorrow morning. If I give you leave to go home to your father tonight, will you pledge me your word of honor before St. George and the Saints, to return before seven?'

" 'Effendi,' I said, kissing his feet, 'you are indeed a good man. I swear by the mother of God and all the Saints that dwell in heaven, that if you let me go I will come back again a full hour before the time fixed for the execution.' And I meant it, too, for I only wished before I died to say good-by once more to Laila.

"Well, the governor took me secretly into his own house, and telling me many times over that he trusted to my honor, and would lose his place if it were known he had let me go, he put me forth, with my brother, by his own private door, making me swear on no account to be late for the execution.

"As soon as I got outside, I said to my brother: 'Tell me, Sirgeh, at whose house is Laila?'

"And my brother answered and smiled, 'Laila is still at Karnak, where we sent her for safety, and our father is well. But I have a plan for your escape that I think will serve you.'

" 'Never!' I cried, horror-struck, 'if I am to break my word of honor to the governor of the prison.'

" 'That isn't it,' he made reply. 'I have a plan of my own which I will proceed in words to make clear before you.'

"What happened next would be long to relate, effendi." But I noticed that the fellah's eyes twinkled as he spoke, like one who passes over of set purpose an important episode. "All I need tell you now is,

that the whole night through the good governor lay awake, wondering whether or not I would come home to time, and blaming himself in his heart for having given such leave to a mere condemned criminal. Still, effendi, though I am but poor, I am a man of honor. As the clock struck six in the prison court next morning, I knocked at the governor's window with the appointed signal; and the governor rose, and let me into my cell, and praised me for my honor, and was well pleased to see me. 'I knew, Athanasio,' he said, roping his mustache once more, 'you were a man to be trusted.'

"At eight o'clock they took me out into the courtyard. The executioner was there already, a great black Nubian, with a very sharp simitar. It was terrible to look round; I was greatly frightened. 'Surely,' said I to myself, 'the bitterness of death is past. But Laila is saved; and I die for Laila.'

"I knelt down and bent my head. I feared, after all, no respite was coming. The executioner stood forth and raised the simitar in his hand. I almost thought I heard it swish through the air; I saw the bright gleam of the blade as it descended. But just at that moment, as the executioner delayed, a loud commotion arose in the outer court. I raised my head and listened. We heard a voice cry, 'In Allah's name, let me in. There must be no execution!' The gates opened wide, and into the inner courtyard there strode with long strides a great white mule, and on its back, scarcely able to sit up, a sorry figure!

"He was wrapped round in bandages, and swathed from head to foot like a man sore wounded. His face was bruised, and his limbs swollen. But he upheld one hand in solemn warning, and in a loud voice again he cried to the executioner, 'In Allah's name, Hassan, let there be no execution!'

"The lookers-on, to right and left, raised a mighty cry, and called out with one voice, 'The Sheikh! The Sheikh! Who can have thus disfigured him?'

"But the Sheikh himself came forward in great pain, like one whose bones ache, and, dismounting from the mule, spoke aloud to the governor. 'In Allah's name,' he said, trembling, 'let this man go; he is innocent. I swore to him falsely, though I believed it to be true. For see, last night, about twelve o'clock, the self-same dog who broke into my house before, entered my room, with violence, through the open window. He carried in his hands the self-same stick as last time, and

had his face covered, as ever, with a linen cloth. And I knew by his figure and his voice he was the very same dog that had previously beaten me. But before I could cry aloud to rouse the house, the infidel had fallen upon me once more and thwacked me, as you see, within an inch of my life, and covered me with bruises, and then bid me take care how I accused innocent people like Athanasio of hurting me. And after that he jumped through the open window and went away once more. And I was greatly afraid, fearing the wrath of Allah, if I let this man Athanasio be killed in his stead, though he is but an infidel. And I rose and saddled my mule very early, and rode straight into Assiout, to tell you and the Cadi I had borne false witness, and to save myself from the guilt of an innocent soul on my shoulders.'

"Then all the people around cried out with one voice, 'A miracle! a miracle!' And the Sheikh stood trembling beside, with faintness and with terror.

"But the governor drew me a few paces apart.

" 'Athanasio, you rascal,' he said, half laughing, 'it is you that have done this thing! It is you that have assaulted him! You got out last night on your word of honor on purpose to play this scurvy trick upon us!'

" 'Effendi,' I made answer, bowing low, 'life is sweet; he beat me, unjustly, first, and he would have taken my Laila from me. Moreover, I swear to you, by St. George and the mother of God, when I left the prison last night I really believed my father was dying.'

"The governor laughed again. 'Well, you can go, you rogue,' he said. 'The Cadi will soon come round to deliver you. But I advise you to make yourself scarce as fast as you can, for sooner or later this trick of yours may be discovered. I can't tell upon you, or I would lose my place. But you may be found out, for all that. Go, at once, up the river.'

"That is my hut that you see over yonder, effendi, where Laila and I live. The Sheikh is dead. And the English are now our real lords in Egypt."

The Inundation

BY ÉMILE ZOLA

(*1840-1902*)

I

My name is Louis Roubieu. I am seventy years of age, and was born in the village of St. Jory, at a few leagues from Toulouse, on the banks of the Garonne. During fourteen years I battled with the soil in order to obtain from it enough bread to feed me. Affluence came at last, and, only a month ago, I was the richest farmer of the whole country-side.

Our home was blessed. Happiness had its abode under our roof. The sun was our ally, and I do not remember a bad harvest. We were nearly a dozen at the farm, all sharing the same happiness: myself still hale and hearty, teaching the young ones how to work; my younger brother, Pierre, a bachelor, and formerly a sergeant in the army; my sister, Agathe, a shrewd housewife, extremely stout and gay, who had come to live with us after her husband's death, and whose laughter rang out from one end of the village to the other. Next came a whole brood: my son Jacques, and Rose, his wife; with their three daughters, Aimée, Véronique, and Marie. The first was married to Cyprien Bouisson, a strapping young fellow, to whom she had given two babies, one two years and the other ten months old; Véronique, on her side, had just become engaged to Gaspard Rabuteau; while Marie, white and very fair, looked more like a town-born lady than a farmer's daughter. This made up ten; I was both a grandfather and a great-grandfather.

When we assembled round the supper-table I used to place my sister Agathe on my right, my brother Pierre on my left, and the children completed the circle, seated by order of seniority, down to the mite but ten months old. The whole lot ate heartily, and how gay they all

were between each mouthful! I felt both pride and pleasure glowing in my veins when the little ones, stretching out their hands to me, shouted:

"Grandfather, give us some more bread. A big piece, grandfather, please!"

Those were glorious days. The busy house sang through all its windows; in the evenings Pierre invented new games or told old stories of his regiment; on Sundays Aunt Agathe baked cakes for the girls, and Marie knew some beautiful hymns which she sang with the voice of a young chorister, looking like a saint too, with her fair hair falling low on her neck, and her hands folded in her lap. At the time of Aimée's marriage with Cyprien I had added a storey to the house, and I used to say jokingly that when Véronique married Gaspard I should have to add another, and that if I did so at each successive wedding the house would end by reaching the sky. None of us wanted to leave it; we would rather have erected a town in the enclosure behind the farm. When the members of a large family agree, it is good to live and die on the spot where one was born.

This last spring, the month of May was superb; the crops had not looked so promising for years. That day I went the round of the land with my son Jacques. We started at about three o'clock. Our meadows, still of a tender green, stretched alongside the Garonne; the grass had nearly reached its full height, and in a willow copse planted only last year there were shoots a yard long. We passed on, examining our corn-fields and vineyards, the land bought bit by bit as our means increased. The wheat was growing apace, the vines were in full bloom, heralding a rich vintage. Jacques laughed his hearty laugh, and, slapping me on the shoulder, said: "Well, father, we sha'n't lack bread or wine. You must be in the good graces of God Almighty, as He lets money rain upon your land like this."

Jacques was right. I had no doubt gained the good graces of some saint in heaven, for all the good luck of the district appeared to fall on us. During a storm the hail would stop at the edge of our fields; if our neighbours' vines were ailing, a protecting wall seemed to rise around ours, and gradually I had come to deem this just. Harming no one, I believed happiness to be my due.

On our way home we crossed some land belonging to us on the opposite side of the village. A plantation of mulberry trees was com-

ing on splendidly, and the almond trees in a grove were bearing all they could. We chatted gaily and made plans for the future. As soon as we had saved the necessary capital we would purchase certain patches of ground lying between our various lots, and thus become the owners of an entire corner of the parish. If the crops turned out as well as they promised, our dream could be realised in the autumn.

As we drew near the farm we saw Rose gesticulating and shouting: "Come on, hurry up!"

One of our cows had just calved, and the whole household was astir. Aunt Agathe went rolling about, while the girls watched the little calf, whose advent seemed like an additional benison. Quite recently we had been compelled to enlarge our sheds, which contained nearly a hundred head of cattle, without reckoning the horses.

"Another lucky day," I said. "We must have a bottle of good wine tonight."

Just then Rose took us aside to inform us that as Gaspard, Véronique's lover, had come to fix the wedding-day, she had kept him to dinner. Gaspard, the eldest son of a farmer of Moranges, was a young man of twenty, known all through our part for his prodigious strength. At a public *fête* at Toulouse he had wrestled with and defeated Martial, the Lion of the South. Withal he was extremely good-natured and tender-hearted, and so shy, indeed, that he blushed whenever Véronique's calm eyes met his own.

I told Rose to call him. He had stayed in the yard helping the maids to hang out the linen of a three months' washing. When he entered the parlour where we were all assembled, Jacques turned to me saying, "It's for you to speak, father."

"Well, my boy, you have come to settle the day," I said.

"Yes, that's why I came," he answered with a deep colour on his cheeks.

"Don't blush, my lad," I resumed. "Shall we say the 10th of July, the day of Sainte Félicité? Today's the 28th of June, so you won't have long to wait. My poor dead wife's name was Félicité—it will be a good omen. Well, is it a settled thing?"

"Yes, all right; the day of Sainte Félicité will do," replied Gaspard.

Then as he came up to Jacques and me his hand fell on our outstretched palms with a might sufficient to fell an ox. Next he kissed Rose, calling her "mother." This stalwart young fellow with such

redoubtable fists was losing sleep and flesh for love of Véronique; he told us that he should have fallen ill if we had not consented to let him have her.

"Now," I resumed, "let us go to our meal. All of you to your places. Thunder and lightning! I am as hungry as a wolf!"

That evening we sat down eleven. We had placed Gaspard and Véronique side by side, and he kept gazing at her, forgetting his supper, and so disturbed by the thought that she was his that big tears moistened his eyelashes. Cyprien and Aimée, who had been married three years, smiled as they watched them; Jacques and Rose, with their twenty-five years of wedlock, were graver; still they stealthily exchanged moist glances, born of a long-abiding tenderness. As for myself, I felt as if I were growing younger again, and living anew in those lovers, whose happiness seemed to bring a nook of paradise to our board. How excellent the soup tasted that evening! Aunt Agathe, who was always one for laughing, ventured to make a few jocose remarks, whereupon Pierre insisted upon relating his love passages with a lady of Lyons. Fortunately we had got to the dessert and were all talking at the same time. I had brought two bottles of sweet wine from the cellar, and we drank to Gaspard and Véronique's good luck, as the fashion is with us. Luck is never to quarrel, to have heaps of children, and put by bags of money. Later on we had some singing; Gaspard knew some love ballads in our dialect, and by way of conclusion we asked Marie for a hymn. She stood up and began at once, her flute-like and delicate voice falling like a caress on the ear.

I had moved towards the window, and as Gaspard joined me I said, "There is nothing new over your way, is there?"

"No," he answered; "they talk a good deal about the heavy rains of the last few days; some say they might turn out badly."

It had, indeed, recently been raining during sixty consecutive hours, and since the previous day the Garonne had been greatly swollen; still we trusted her, and as long as she did not overflow we could not think of her as a dangerous neighbour. She was so useful, her expanse of water was so broad and gentle; and, moreover, peasants do not readily quit their homes even if the roof be about to fall.

"Nonsense," I said; "nothing will happen; it's the same every year. The river puts up its back as if it were in a rage, then it quiets down in a single night, and subsides as gently as a lamb. Take my word,

lad, it's only a joke. Just look out of the window, and see what splendid weather we are having!"

Then with my hand I pointed to the sky.

It was seven o'clock; the sun was setting. All was blue; the sky showed like an immense expanse of azure, through which the sunset swam like golden dust. From above there slowly descended a delight, reaching to the verge of the distant horizon. I had never seen the village in such tender restfulness. A pink glow was fading under the eaves. I could hear a neighbour laughing and children chattering at the bend of the road opposite our house; while from further off the lowing of herds returning to their sheds reached us, softened by the distance.

Meanwhile, the deep roar of the Garonne sounded incessantly; but I was so used to the voice of the river that it seemed to be merely the voice of silence. By degrees the sky whitened, and the village seemed falling into a serener sleep. It was the end of a beautiful day, and I fancied that all our happiness, our rich harvests, Véronique's engagement, came to us wafted from above, in the purity of the dying light. A benediction spread over us with the farewell of day.

I had returned to the centre of the room where the girls were chatting merrily, and we were listening to them with smiling lips, when suddenly, through the great peace of the twilight, an appalling shriek rang out—a shriek of terror and of death:

"The Garonne! the Garonne!"

II

We ran to the yard.

St. Jory lies at the very bottom of a dip in the land, lower than the river, and some five hundred yards away from it. A screen of poplars dividing some meadows shuts out all view of the water.

We could see nothing, but the shriek still resounded: "The Garonne! the Garonne!"

Then, coming from the road in front of us, two men and three women abruptly appeared, one of the latter holding a child in her arms. They were shouting, frenzied with terror, and running as fast as they could over the hard ground. Every now and then they looked back with scared faces, as if they were being pursued by a pack of wolves.

"What has happened?" asked Cyprien. "Can you make out anything, grandfather?"

"No," I answered; "the leaves are not even stirring."

The low line of the horizon lay still and peaceful, but before I had done speaking a sharp exclamation broke from the others. Behind the fugitives, between the trunks of the poplars, over the tall grass, we caught sight of something resembling a pack of grey, yellowish spotted animals racing onwards. They appeared on all sides—waves hurrying upon waves, an invasion of masses of water crested with foam, shaking white saliva, and making the ground quiver with the heavy gallop of their serried ranks.

Then we also echoed the despairing cry, "The Garonne! the Garonne!"

The two men and the three women were still flying along the road, and they could hear the hideous gallop gaining upon them. Presently the waves formed in a single line, rolling and crashing with the thunder of charging battalions. Under their first onset three poplars snapped; their tall foliage tottered and disappeared. Then a shed was swallowed up; a wall burst; unharnessed carts were carried away like wisps of straw. But the water seemed specially to pursue the fugitives. At a bend of the road, which is very steep at that particular spot, the flood suddenly fell in immense volume, cutting off their retreat. We saw them still attempting to run, splashing in the water, but silent now and maddened with fear. The waves rose to their knees; at last a huge billow dashed upon the woman who was carrying the child. Then all were submerged.

"Quick, quick!" I cried. "Come in! the house is strong. We have nothing to fear."

However, out of prudence, we at once ascended to the first floor, making the girls pass before us; I was determined to be the last. Our house was built on a bank above the road, and the water was now slowly invading the yard with a soft little ripple. We were not much alarmed.

"Never mind," said Jacques reassuringly; "there is no danger. Do you remember, father, how, in '55, the water came into the yard just as it does now? It rose to a foot, and then receded."

"It's a pity for the crops, anyhow," muttered Cyprien, half aloud.

"No, no; it won't be much," I said, noting the dilated, questioning

eyes of the women. Aimée had laid her children on her bed and sat close to them with Véronique and Marie. Aunt Agathe talked of warming some wine which she had brought with her, in order to cheer us. Jacques and Rose looked out of one window and I stood at the other with my brother Cyprien and Gaspard.

"Come up, can't you?" I called to the two maids who were paddling about in the yard. "Don't stop there and get your legs wet."

"But the poor beasts," they answered; "they are frightened and will get killed in the sheds."

"Never mind! Come up. We will look after the cattle presently."

If the water continued to rise it would be impossible to save the cattle, but I thought it best not to alarm the servants. I tried to appear quite at ease, and leaning over the window-sill I gave an account of the progress of the flood. After rushing to the assault of the village, the river had taken possession of even its narrowest lanes. The race of the charging waves had ceased; there was now a stealthy invincible invasion. The hollow in which St. Jory lies was being transformed into a lake. In our yard the water had risen to a height of three feet already: I watched its ascent, but I affirmed that it remained stationary, and once I even hinted that it was subsiding.

"You will have to sleep here tonight, my boy," I said, turning to Gaspard, "that is, unless the roads get clear in a few hours, which might easily be the case."

He looked at me; his face was very pale, and I saw his eyes turn to Véronique, gleaming the while with intolerable anguish.

It was now half-past eight. Out of doors it was still light—a white glimmer, unspeakably mournful, dropping from the pale sky. Before the maids joined us they had thought of bringing two lamps. I had them lit, hoping that they would brighten the darkening room in which we had taken refuge. Aunt Agathe now pushed a table forward and suggested a game of cards. The excellent woman, whose eyes sought mine anxiously every now and then, was especially desirous of diverting the children: her cheerfulness was grandly brave, and she laughed to conjure away the terror which she felt was creeping over all the others. The game was arranged; Aunt Agathe forced Aimée, Véronique, and Marie into their chairs, placed the cards in their resistless fingers, and began shuffling, dealing, and cutting with such a flow of words that she almost stifled the sound of the rising flood.

But our daughters could not fix their minds on the game; they remained pale, with feverish hands, bending their heads to listen. Every now and then one or another of them would turn uneasily and whisper:

"Grandfather, is it still rising?"

It *was* rising with fearful rapidity, but I answered carelessly, "No, no; go on playing—there is no danger."

Never before had I felt my heart wrung by such cruel dread. All the men had grouped themselves in front of the windows to shut out the appalling scene; we tried to look unconcerned when our faces were turned to the room, facing the lamps whose circular light fell on the table as amidst the gentle peace of homely vigils. I remembered winter evenings when we had sat thus at that table. It was the same quiet picture, full of the soft warmth of affection. But while perfect peace dwelt within, I could hear behind my back the bellowing of the overflowing river, which was ever rising and rushing onward.

"Louis," whispered my brother Pierre, "the water is only three feet from the window; something must be done."

I pressed his arm to silence him, but it was too late to conceal our peril. The cattle had become frantic in the outhouses: we plainly heard the bleating and lowing of the maddened animals, and particularly the wild shrieks of the horses who felt themselves in danger.

"O my God! my God!" murmured Aimée, who stood up, convulsed by a long shudder, and with her closed fists pressed to her temples.

The women had all risen, and we were powerless to keep them from the windows; they stood there erect and mute, their hair lifted by a wind of terror. The twilight had come; a treacherous gleam hovered above the water sheet, the pale sky looked like a white pall thrown over the earth; afar off some smoke was trailing; then everything became blurred: it was the close of a day of horror, sinking into a night of death. And not a human sound—only the dull roar of the infinitely widening expanse of water, and the lowing and neighing of the frenzied animals!

"O God! O God!" repeated the women under their breath, as if afraid to speak aloud.

A loud crash silenced them. The infuriated cattle had broken through the stable doors: they passed by in the yellow flood, rolling as they were carried away by the current; the sheep were hurled along in droves like dead leaves whirling in pools; the cows and the horses

struggled, trying to feel the ground but losing their footing; our big grey horse refused to die: he reared, stretched out his long neck and panted like the bellows of a forge, till the eager waters dashed on his hindquarters, and then we saw him yield himself up and disappear.

Then for the first time we screamed; our cries seemed to come unconsciously, propelled by some alien will. With hands outstretched towards all those dear animals hurried away for ever, we moaned and wept, sobbing aloud, giving vent to the tears and lamentations we had restrained. It was indeed our ruin! the crops lost, the cattle drowned, our fortune gone in a few brief hours! Oh, God was not just! We had not offended Him, and yet He had taken back all He had given! I shook my fist at Heaven! I recalled our afternoon walk, the meadows, the wheat-fields, the vineyards, all so promising! They had all lied! Happiness had lied! The very sun, when he had set so gently and calmly in the deep serenity of evening, had lied.

The flood was still rising, and all at once my brother Pierre, who had been watching it, exclaimed sharply: "Louis, look out! The water has reached the windows. We can't stay here."

These words broke upon our despair. I pulled myself together, and shrugging my shoulders said, "After all, money is nothing. As long as we are all together and safe, there is nothing to regret. We must begin work afresh, that is all."

"Yes, yes—you are right, father," returned Jacques feverishly, "and we *are* safe—the walls are solid. Let us get upon the roof."

It was our only refuge. The water, after mounting the staircase step by step with a persevering gurgle, was entering at the door. We repaired to the loft, keeping close together, with the vague instinct which makes people in peril anxious to remain side by side. Cyprien alone had vanished. I called to him and he came out of an adjoining room with a white scared face. Then as I suddenly became aware of the absence of the two maids, and stopped to wait for them, he looked at me strangely and whispered:

"Dead—the outbuilding where their room was has just given way."

The poor creatures must have gone to get their savings out of their boxes. Cyprien, in the same tone, told me that they had managed to throw a ladder across to the building where they slept, and had used it as a bridge. I warned him to say nothing, but I felt a great chill at the back of my neck. It was the breath of death entering our house.

We did not even think of turning out the lamps, when we went up to the roof in our turn; the cards remained spread out on the table; there was a foot of water in the room.

III

Fortunately the roof was broad and the incline a gentle one. It was reached by a skylight opening on to a little platform, upon which our party took refuge. The women sat down, and presently the men stepped out on the tiles to reconnoitre, going as far as the two tall chimney-stacks at either end of the roof. I remained leaning against the aperture of the skylight, looking towards the four points of the horizon.

"Help cannot fail to come soon," I said with forced hopefulness. "The folks of Saintin have some boats, and they will pass this way. See! over there, isn't that a lantern on the water?"

I received no answer. Pierre had mechanically lighted his pipe, and was smoking so furiously that with every puff he spat out bits of the stem which he had broken between his teeth. Jacques and Cyprien stared into the distance with mournful faces, while Gaspard, with clenched fists, went on pacing the roof as if seeking for some outlet. The women, crouching and shuddering at our feet, covered their eyes to avoid the terrible sight. Presently, however, Rose, raising her head, looked round her.

"Where are the servants?" she asked. "Why don't they come up?"

I pretended not to hear, but she turned to me and fixed her eyes on mine.

"Where are the girls?" she repeated.

I turned away. I could not lie to her, and I felt that the deadly chill which had already touched me was passing over our wives and daughters. They had understood. Marie rose to her full height; a deep sigh parted her lips; and then sinking down she burst into a passion of tears. Aimée kept the heads of her two children in her lap, covering them up with her skirts as if to shield them. Véronique, who had her face in her hands, remained motionless. Aunt Agathe, growing paler, was repeatedly making the sign of the Cross and muttering *Paters* and *Aves*.

All around us the scene was one of supreme grandeur. The night,

which had now completely fallen, had the clear limpidity of summer darkness. There was no moon as yet, but the sky was studded with countless stars, and it was of so pure a blue that all the surrounding space was filled with an azure light. The horizon was so clearly defined that it seemed to harbour the twilight; and meanwhile the immense sheet of water, spreading out under the soft skies, became quite white, luminous as with a glow of its own, a phosphorescence which tipped the crest of every wave with tiny flamelets. Land was nowhere visible, the whole plain must have been submerged. One evening, on the coast near Marseilles, I had seen the sea looking like this, and had remained gazing at it transfixed with admiration.

"The water rises, the water rises," repeated my brother Pierre, still biting the stem of his pipe, which he had allowed to go out.

Indeed, the water was now only a yard from the edge of the roof. It was losing its tranquillity, its lake-like quietude, and currents were forming. When it reached a certain height we were no longer sheltered by the rising ground before the village; and as soon as this was covered, in less than an hour's time, the flood became threatening, lashing the houses with all the wreckage, staved-in barrels, timbers, and trusses of hay, which it carried on its bosom. In the distance we heard the deafening shocks of the onsets against the walls. Poplars snapped and fell with a sinister splash, and houses crashed down like cartfuls of stones turned over on the roadside.

Jacques, unnerved by the women's sobs, kept on repeating: "We cannot stop here. Something must be done. Father, I implore you, let us try something."

Hesitating and stammering, I repeated after him: "Yes, yes, let us try something."

And none of us knew what to try. Gaspard proposed that he should take Véronique on his back, and swim away with her. Pierre suggested a raft. They were both crazy. At last, however, Cyprien said: "If we could only reach the church."

And indeed high above the flood the church still rose up intact with its little square tower. We were separated from it by seven dwellings. Our house, the first of the village, adjoined a taller building, which in its turn leant against its neighbour. It might be feasible to reach the presbytery by the roofs, and thence it would be easy to get into the church. Many of the villagers had already sought that refuge probably,

for the neighbouring roofs were deserted, and we heard a murmur of voices which certainly came from the belfry. But at best it was a perilous and uncertain undertaking.

"It is impossible," said Pierre. "Rambeau's house is too lofty; we should need some ladders."

"At any rate, I'll go and see," said Cyprien. "If we cannot get across I'll return; if we can we must all go, the men carrying the women."

I let him start. He was right: situated as we were, everything must be attempted. With the help of an iron clamp fixed to a chimney-stack he had just succeeded in climbing on to the next house when his wife, Aimée, raised her eyes, and saw that he was gone.

"Where is he?" she said. "I will not let him leave me. We are one —we must die together."

Then as she caught sight of him on the other roof she darted across the tiles, still carrying her children.

"Wait for me, Cyprien," she panted; "I am coming with you. I will die with you."

She would not be denied. Her husband, leaning over, implored her to remain with us, promising to return, and assuring her that he was only acting for our common rescue. But, shaking her head, and with a wild look in her eyes, she still repeated excitedly: "I am coming with you. I will die with you."

He yielded: first he took the children, and then he helped his wife to climb up to him. We could see them walking slowly on the apex of the roof. Aimée had again taken her weeping children in her arms, and at every step Cyprien turned and supported her.

"As soon as she is in safety," I shouted, "come back to us."

I saw him wave his hand, but the roar of the water did not allow me to hear his answer. They were soon out of sight; they had descended on to the house beyond, the roof of which was lower. Five minutes later they again appeared to view on the third roof, which must have been very steep, for we could see that they were crawling up it on their knees. A sudden dread possessed me, and raising my hands to my mouth I shouted out with all my strength: "Come back, come back!"

All of us, Pierre, Jacques, and Gaspard, called to them to return; our voices seemed to stay them for a moment, but they soon moved on. They had reached the corner where the street turned in front of

Rambeau's house, a tall building rising nearly nine feet above all the neighbouring roofs. For a moment they wavered, and then Cyprien began to climb up a chimney with catlike agility. Aimée, who had evidently consented to wait for him, remained erect amid the tiles. We could plainly distinguish her clasping her babies to her bosom, standing out black against the clear sky, and looking much taller than she really was. It was then that the awful catastrophe began.

Rambeau's house, originally intended for some business purposes, was very flimsily built, and, moreover, its frontage received the full shock of the current in the street. I fancied I could see it tremble under the onset of the flood, and with bated breath I watched Cyprien's progress along the roof. Suddenly we heard a deep growl. The round moon had risen, freely pacing the sky, her yellow disc lighting up the immense lake with the clear brightness of a lamp. Not a single detail was lost to us. That growl was the noise of Rambeau's house falling in. A scream of terror escaped as we saw Cyprien sink down. In that tempestuous crash we could only see the splashing of the waves under the remnants of the roof. Then all was calm again, the lake became level once more, with the black carcass of the submerged house bristling above the water with its snapped floors—a confused mass of tangled timbers looking like the framework of some half-destroyed cathedral. Between those timbers I thought I could see a body moving, a living form wrestling with superhuman efforts.

"He lives!" I cried. "Ah, blessed be God, he lives! There, above that white sheet of water lit up by the moon!"

We shook with hysterical laughter and clapped our hands for joy, as if all danger had passed away.

"He will get up again," said Pierre.

"Yes, yes," explained Gaspard. "See, he is trying to catch hold of the beam on his left."

But our laughter was suddenly hushed. We remained dumb, silenced by anxiety. We had just realised in what an awful position Cyprien now found himself. In the fall of the house his feet had been caught between two beams, and he was hanging head downwards at a few inches above the water, and quite unable to free himself. His agony was horrible. On the roof of the other house stood Aimée with her two children, shaken by convulsive shudders. There she remained, a witness of her husband's death-struggle, never once taking

her eyes off him. From her rigid lips there came a continuous lugubrious sound, like the howl of a dog frenzied by terror.

"We cannot let him die like that," said Jacques in distraction. "We must go to him."

"One might crawl down the beams, perhaps," muttered Pierre, "and disengage him."

They were already moving towards the nearest roof when the house it covered suddenly shook and crumbled in its turn. The way was cut off. Our blood froze in our veins. We seized each other's hands and pressed them nervously, unable to turn our eyes away from the ghastly sight.

Cyprien had at first attempted to stiffen himself, and with extraordinary muscular strength he had finally succeeded in getting further away from the water and maintaining a sidelong position. But fatigue was mastering him: he tried to resist, to lay hold of the beams, beating the air with his arms in the hope of finding something to which he might cling; then accepting death, he fell back and again hung down quite motionless. Death was slow to come; his hair barely touched the water, which was patiently rising—he must have felt its coolness on his head. A first wave wetted his brow, another closed his eyes—slowly his head vanished from our view.

The women, huddled at our feet, hid their faces with their clasped hands. We fell on our knees with outstretched arms, stammering supplications and crying bitterly. On the other roof Aimée, still erect, with her children close pressed to her bosom, shrieked still louder and louder amid the night.

IV

I CANNOT tell how long the stupor of that crisis lasted. When I recovered my senses the water was higher still; it now reached the tiles, and our roof was only a narrow island barely emerging from the immense water expanse. On the right and left the houses had fallen. The sea was widening on all sides.

"We are moving," whispered Rose, as she clutched at the tiles.

And, indeed, we all felt a pitching motion, as if the roof had changed into a floating raft; the heavy swell seemed to carry us along. It was only by turning to the motionless church tower that we got rid

of this delusion, and realised that we were on the same spot amid the angry surf.

It was then that the siege began in earnest. The current so far had followed the street, but the increasing wreckage that barred the way now caused it to flow back. A furious onset commenced. As soon as a plank or beam passed within the current's grasp it was seized, swung round, and hurled like a ram against our house; the water never loosened its grasp; the current sucked the wreckage back merely to launch it again at our walls, which it assailed with regularly repeated blows. Sometimes ten or twelve large pieces of wood would attack us at once on all sides. The water hissed, foamy splashes wetted our feet. We heard the dull moan of the sonorous house filling with water, and the creaking of the broken partitions; and whenever a more savage assault made the whole building quiver, we fancied that it was all over—that the walls were opening and giving us up to the river through their yawning breaches.

Gaspard, who had ventured to the very edge of the roof, succeeded in catching a passing beam, which he dragged out of the water with his powerful athletic arms.

"We must defend ourselves," he shouted.

Then Jacques, with the assistance of Pierre, endeavoured to stop a long pole. I cursed my old age, which left me useless and as weak as a child. However, the defence was being organised; it was the fight of three men against the flood. Gaspard, armed with his beam, waited for the passing timbers which the current turned into battering rams, and kept them off at some little distance from the walls. The shock at times was so great that he fell down. Meantime Pierre and Jacques were manœuvring with their long pole, shoving away the nearer wreckage.

This fierce and senseless battle lasted during nearly an hour. As the time passed the combatants grew wildly excited: they beat the water, insulted it, and swore at it. Gaspard hacked at it as if in a bodily struggle, lunged out with his beam as if he were trying to pierce a human breast. And all this time the water remained quietly obstinate, without a wound—invincible. Jacques and Pierre at last sank down on the roof exhausted, and Gaspard, while making a final effort, saw the current wrest his beam from his grasp and hurl it against us. The struggle had become impossible.

Marie and Véronique, clasped in each other's arms, were repeating the same words in broken tones—words of terror the echo of which still sounds incessantly in my ears: "I will not die! I will not die!"

Rose embraced them both, trying to reassure and comfort them; but at last she herself, trembling and shivering, lifted her white face and unconsciously cried aloud, "I will not die!"

Aunt Agathe alone remained quite silent. She had ceased praying and crossing herself. In a sort of dumb stupor she now let her eyes wander over the scene—and whenever they chanced to meet mine, she still attempted a smile.

The water was lapping the tiles. No help could reach us now. We still heard the sound of voices issuing from the church—two lanterns had gleamed for an instant in the distance, then again the silence deepened amid the desolate immensity of the yellow expanse. In all probability the people of Saintin who owned some boats had been surprised by the flood before us.

Gaspard was still wandering about the roof; and suddenly he called to us, saying: "Look out! Help me—hold me tight!"

He had again snatched hold of a passing timber, and was lying in wait for a huge black mass which was slowly swimming towards us. It was the broad, solid plank-roof of a shed, wrenched away entire, and floating like a raft. When it came within reach Gaspard arrested it, and feeling that he was being dragged off he called to us to help him. We seized him round the waist and clasped him tight. As soon as the wreck entered the current it advanced of its own accord against our roof, coming forward with so much violence that for a moment we feared we should see it fly asunder.

However, Gaspard boldly jumped upon this raft thus sent to us by Providence: he walked all over it to make sure of its strength, while Jacques and Pierre maintained it in position at the edge of our roof. Then he began to laugh, and said exultingly, "You see, grandfather, we are saved. Come, you women, leave off crying! It is as good as a real boat. Look here, my feet are dry. It can carry us all, too. It feels like home already."

However, he thought it better to strengthen it, and securing some more beams he bound them with some ropes which Pierre had happened to bring up with him on the chance of their being wanted. While

thus engaged, Gaspard once fell overboard, but he soon came up again, and answered our cry of alarm with renewed hilarity.

"The Garonne knows me," he laughed; "I have often swum it for a league at a time." Then when he had got on the roof again he shook himself and exclaimed, "Come aboard—there's no time to lose!"

The women had fallen on their knees, and Gaspard had to carry Véronique and Marie to the middle of the raft, where he made them sit down. Rose and Agathe slipped off the tiles unaided and joined the girls. At that moment I again glanced towards the church. Aimée was still on the same roof, only now she was leaning against a chimney-stack, holding her children aloft with rigidly uplifted arms. The water had risen to her waist.

"Do not worry, grandfather," said Gaspard. "I promise you that we'll pick her up as we pass by."

Pierre and Jacques were already on the raft. I jumped after them. It tilted over a little on one side, but seemed strong enough to carry us all. Gaspard was the last to leave the roof, and gave each of us one of the poles which he had in readiness to be used as oars, he himself keeping a very long one, which he handled with great dexterity. He had taken command, and by his instructions we all pressed against the tiles with our poles, trying to shove off. But our efforts were fruitless: the raft seemed to adhere to the roof; at every fresh attempt we made the current hurled us back against the house. We were incurring great danger, for every fresh shock threatened to shatter the boards on which we stood.

Once more we became conscious of our impotency. We had thought ourselves saved, but we still belonged to the greedy river. I even began to regret that the women had left the roof, for I expected, every minute, to see them hurled into the furious water and carried away. But when I suggested that we should return to the house they one and all rebelled.

"No, no, let us try again," they pleaded, "or die here."

Gaspard was not laughing now. We multiplied our efforts, weighing on the poles with feverish strength, but all in vain. At last Pierre had an idea. He climbed on to the roof again, and with a long rope managed to pull the raft to the left and get it out of the current. Then after he had jumped on to the raft again a few strokes of our poles enabled us to get into the open.

But Gaspard remembered his promise to rescue my poor Aimée, whose plaintive wail had not once ceased. To effect the rescue it was necessary to cross the street where raged that terrible current against which we had fought so desperately. He cast a questioning look at me. I was overcome. Never had I been placed in so cruel an alternative. Eight lives must be endangered, and yet, if for their sakes I hesitated just one moment, I lacked the strength to resist the mother's lugubrious call.

"Yes, yes," I said to Gaspard. "We cannot go without her."

He bent his head in silence and began to ply his pole, taking advantage of such walls as were still standing. We slowly skirted the adjoining house, passing over our own cow-sheds, but as soon as we turned the bend of the street we shrieked aloud. The current had captured us again, and was carrying us off, forcing us back to our roof.

It lasted only a few seconds. We were indeed whirled away so suddenly that the screams we immediately raised expired amid the deafening crash of the raft against the tiles. It was rent asunder, the shivered boards were scattered, and we were hurled into the foaming whirlpool. I do not know what followed. I only remember that as I fell I saw Aunt Agathe lying at full length on the water buoyed up by her skirts. Then without a struggle she slowly sank, her head thrown backwards.

A sharp pain made me open my eyes. Pierre was dragging me by the hair along the tiles. I remained lying there stupefied, with open eyes. Pierre had left me to dive again, and in the confusion of my mind I thought it strange when I espied Gaspard on the spot just vacated by my brother. The young man had Véronique in his arms. He laid her near me, plunged in again, and brought up Marie, who was so white, rigid, and motionless that I thought her dead. Then for the third time he threw himself into the water, but now he sought in vain and returned empty-handed. Pierre had joined him: they were talking low, and I could not hear what they said. As they were coming, seemingly quite exhausted, up the incline of the roof I moaned out —"And Aunt Agathe, and Jacques, and Rose?"

They shook their heads; big tears were welling in their eyes. From the brief, husky words they spoke, I gathered that Jacques' brains had been dashed out by a passing beam. Rose had clung to her husband's corpse and been dragged away with it. As for Aunt Agathe, she had

not reappeared; we presumed that her body, driven forward by the current, had entered the house beneath us through one of the open windows.

Raising myself up, I turned towards the chimney-stack which Aimée had been clutching hold of a few moments previously. The flood had risen higher still; Aimée was no longer wailing; I only saw her two stiffened arms holding the children above the water. Then all collapsed: the sheet of water closed over her arms and her babes amid the sleepy glimmer of the full moon.

V

There were now only five of us on the roof. The water had left us but a narrow dry strip on the crest of the tiles. One of the chimney-stacks had been swept away. We had to raise Véronique and Marie, who had fainted, and keep them erect, to prevent the surf from wetting their legs. At last they regained consciousness, and our anguish increased as we saw them shivering in their soaked garments, and heard them wailing that they would not die. We comforted them as one quiets children, assuring them that they were not going to die; that we would prevent Death from taking them. But they no longer believed us; they realised that their life was nearly spent. Each time that the word "die" fell like a knell from their lips their teeth chattered, and mutual dread threw them into each other's arms.

It was the end. A few ruined walls marked here and there the spot where the submerged village had stood. The church, alone intact, raised its belfry on high, and a sound of voices still proceeded from it, telling of people who were safely sheltered. In the distance the vast overflow of the raging waters roared continuously. We no longer heard the crash of crumbling houses, resembling the rough unloading of gravel on a road. The wreck was forsaken as if it were in mid-ocean, a thousand miles from land.

Once we fancied that we detected a splash of oars on our left: it was like a rhythmical gentle beat growing clearer and nearer. Ah! what a hopeful music it seemed! We craned our necks forward to question space. We held our breath. But we saw nothing. The yellow expanse stretched out, spotted with black shadowy things, but none of those things, crests or trees, fragments of shattered walls, were

stirring. Tufts of herbage, empty barrels, planks, brought us delusive joys. We waved our handkerchiefs, till, recognising our error, we again became the prey of anxiety, wondering whence came the sound that ever fell upon our ears.

"Ah, I see it!" suddenly cried Gaspard; "a large boat—look! over there."

And with his outstretched arm he pointed to a distant spot. Neither Pierre nor I could distinguish anything, but Gaspard obstinately insisted that it was a boat. The strokes of the oars became more distinct, and finally we all saw it. It was moving slowly, and seemed to be circling round us without drawing any nearer. I remember that we then became almost mad, waving our arms, raving, shouting, insanely apostrophising the boat, insulting it, and calling it a coward. The craft, still silent and dark, appeared to turn more slowly. Was it really a boat? I cannot tell; I only know that when we realised that it was gone, we felt that it had carried our last hope away.

After that we expected every second to be engulfed in the fall of the house. By this time it must be undermined, and was probably only held up by some stouter wall, which would drag down the whole building when it gave way. What especially terrified me was to feel the roof sinking under our weight; the house might possibly have resisted all night, but the tiles were loosened and broken by the attacking beams. We took refuge on the left, where the rafters seemed to be less impaired, but even there they soon seemed to weaken, and would infallibly yield if the five of us remained huddled together on so narrow a space.

For the last few moments my brother Pierre had mechanically placed his pipe between his lips again. He was twisting his thick, military-looking moustache, and muttering confusedly, with his dark brows knit. The increasing peril which surrounded us on all sides, and against which there was no possible fighting, made him more and more irritated. He had two or three times spat into the water with angry contempt; then, as we were sinking more and more, he made up his mind, and walked down the slope of the roof.

"Pierre! Pierre!" I cried, afraid to understand.

He turned and answered quietly, "Good-bye, Louis; this lasts too long to suit me, and my going will give you more room."

Then, having thrown his pipe into the water, he resolutely flung himself after it, adding: "Good-night; I've had enough of it!"

He did not rise again; he was but an indifferent swimmer, and no doubt he surrendered himself to the flood, broken-hearted by our ruin, the loss of those he loved, and feeling unwilling to survive them.

Two o'clock struck at the church tower. The night was almost over; that horrible night, so full of agony and tears. The dry strip under our feet was gradually becoming smaller. There was a soft gurgle of running water, with little caressing wavelets playing and tossing. Then again the current changed; the wreckage was carried to the right of the village, floating lazily along, as if the flood, now seemingly about to reach its greatest height, were resting, weary and satisfied.

All at once Gaspard removed his shoes and coat. During the last moment or two I had watched him wringing his hands and crushing his fingers. In answer to my question he said: "Listen, grandfather. It kills me to wait here. I cannot stop any longer. Let me act—I can save her!"

He was alluding to Véronique. I attempted to reason with him, saying that he would never be strong enough to swim with the girl as far as the church. But he obstinately insisted, repeating: "I love her —I shall save her!"

I remained silent, simply drawing Marie to my breast. He thought no doubt that I was reproaching him with his lover-like selfishness.

"I will come back for Marie," he stammered; "I swear it. I will find a boat somehow, and manage to get help. Trust me, grandfather!"

He stripped, merely retaining his trousers, and then in a low and hurried voice he gave some urgent advice to Véronique, telling her not to struggle, but to yield herself to him, and, above all, not to get alarmed. The girl stared at him, and huskily answered "Yes" to each sentence he spoke.

At last, having made the sign of the Cross, although he was not habitually devout, he let himself slide down the roof, holding Véronique by a rope which he had passed under her arms. She gave a loud scream, beat the water with her limbs, and fainted away.

"It is best so!" shouted Gaspard. "Now I can answer for her."

With unspeakable anguish I watched their progress. On the white water I easily discerned Gaspard's slightest movements: he supported the girl by means of the rope which he had also twined around himself,

and he had thrown her partially across his right shoulder. Her dead weight occasionally made him sink, but he rallied, swimming on with supernatural energy.

I was getting hopeful, for he had already covered one-third of the distance, when he struck against some obstacle—some wall hidden below the water's surface. The shock was appalling; they both disappeared. Then I saw Gaspard rise alone; the rope had broken. He plunged twice, and finally he reappeared, again carrying Véronique. He slung her upon his back, but as the supporting rope was gone, she weighed him down more heavily than before. In spite of this he was still advancing. A moment later, as they neared the church, I began to tremble violently; then suddenly I attempted to call out, for I had caught sight of some floating timber coming upon them sideways. My mouth remained wide open—a second concussion parted them; then the waters met again, but they were gone.

From that moment I remained stupefied, retaining merely the animal instinct of self-preservation, and shrinking back whenever the water gained on me. Amidst this stupor I continued hearing a sound of laughter without understanding whence it came. The day was rising in a great white dawn; the air was pleasant, very fresh and very calm, as it is beside a mere before the sunrise. But laughter still rang out, and on turning round I saw Marie standing near me in her dripping garments. It was she who was laughing!

How sweet and gentle she looked, poor darling, amid the advent of the morning! I saw her stoop, take a little water in the hollow of her palm and bathe her face. Then she twisted her rich golden hair and bound it round her head. She was dressing: she fancied herself back in her little room preparing for church on a Sunday morning, while the bells were ringing merrily; and still she laughed her childish laughter, with a happy face and serene clear eyes.

Her madness was contagious, for I began to laugh with her; terror had demented her, and it was a mercy vouchsafed by Heaven, for she seemed conscious only of the enchanting beauty of the spring-tide dawn.

I watched her quietly, nodding gently, and without comprehending. She went on with her toilet till she considered herself ready to start, and then raising her pure crystalline voice she began to sing one of her favourite hymns. Presently, however, she stopped, and, as if answer-

ing a call which she alone could hear, she cried: "I am coming! I am coming!"

Then resuming her chant she descended the incline of the roof, and stepped into the water, which softly, tenderly closed over her without shock or struggle. For myself, I continued to smile, looking with a happy, contented face on the spot where she had disappeared.

After that I do not remember. I was quite alone on the roof, the water touching me. A single chimney-stack remained standing, and I think I must have clung to it with all my strength, like an animal who refuses to perish. Beyond that I know nothing—nothing—all is black and vacant in my mind.

VI

Why am I here? I have been told that the people of Saintin arrived at about six o'clock with their boats, and found me in a dead faint hanging on to the chimney. The water had been so cruel as not to take me away with those I loved while I remained unconscious of my bereavement.

I—the old one—have obstinately lived on. All the others are gone, the children in swaddling-clothes, the girls and their lovers, the young and the old married couples. And yet I remain living like a coarse dry weed rooted to the stones. If I had the courage, I would do what Pierre did. Like him, I would say, "Good-night, I have had enough of this," and then I would fling myself into the Garonne, following the course that all the others have taken. I have not one child left me; my house is a ruin; my fields lie waste. Oh, for the nights when we all sat at the table, the elders in the centre, the young ones in a row, when their merriment warmed my blood! Oh, for the grand days of harvest and vintage, when we all toiled together and came home in the gloaming, exultant in the pride of our wealth! Oh, for the handsome children and the fair vines, the lovely girls and the golden corn, the joy of my old age, the living reward of my whole life! Now that all this is dead and gone, tell me, O God! why wilt Thou have me stay?

I cannot be comforted. I want no help. I shall give my land to those of the village folk who possess children—for they will have the heart to clear it and till it afresh. Those who have no children need but a corner wherein to die.

I have had one wish, a last desire—I wanted to find the corpses of my dear ones and to bury them in our churchyard, under a stone which would some day cover me also. I heard that a great many bodies which had been washed away by the river had been recovered at Toulouse; so I started to go and see them.

Was there ever so ghastly a scene? Nearly two thousand houses destroyed, seven hundred victims, all the bridges swept away, a whole district of the city razed, drowned in the mud; poignant tragedies, twenty thousand wretches half naked and dying of starvation, the town poisoned by the stench of unburied corpses, and terrified by the fear of typhus. And mourning everywhere, funerals in all the streets, distress such as no alms could allay. But I walked on among the ruins of others, regardless of aught save my own—my own dear dead, the thought of whom weighed me down.

People told me that many bodies had been found, and that they had already been buried in long rows in the cemetery. However, the precaution had been taken to photograph the unrecognised ones. It was among the piteous portraits shown me that I came across those of Gaspard and Véronique. The lovers were still clasped in a passionate embrace; they had given and received their nuptial kiss in death. They clung to each other so closely, mouth pressed to mouth, and arms entwined, that it would have been impossible to part them without breaking their limbs. So they had been photographed together, and they slept united beneath the sod.

And that is all I have left, that horrible picture of those two fair children, disfigured and swollen by the water, but still bearing on their livid faces the imprint of their heroic love. I gaze upon them and I weep.

Sport Royal

An Extract from the Journals of Julius Jason, Esquire

BY ANTHONY HOPE

I

THE SEQUEL TO THE BALL

Heidelberg seems rather a tourist-ridden, hackneyed sort of place to be the mother of adventures. Nevertheless, it is there that my story begins. I had been traveling on the Continent, and came to Heidelberg to pay my duty to the castle, and recruit in quiet after a spell of rather laborious idleness at Homburg and Baden. At first sight I made up my mind that the place would bore me, and I came down to dinner at the hotel, looking forward only to a bad dinner and an early bed. The room was so full that I could not get a table to myself, and, seeing one occupied only by a couple of gentlemanly looking men, I made for it, and took the third seat, facing one of the strangers, a short, fair young man, with a little flaxen mustache and a soldierlike air, and having the other, who was older, dark, and clean-shaved, on my left. The fourth seat was empty.

The two gentlemen returned my bow with well-bred negligence, and I started on my soup. As I finished it, I looked up and saw my companions interchanging glances. Catching my eye, they both looked away in an absent fashion, each the while taking out of his pocket a red silk handkerchief and laying it on the table by him. I turned away for a moment, then suddenly looked again and found their eyes on me, and I fancied that the next moment the eyes wandered from me to the handkerchiefs. I happened to be carrying a red handkerchief myself, and, thinking either that something was in the wind or perhaps that my friends were having a joke at my expense (though, as I said, they looked well-bred men), I took it out of my pocket and, laying it on the

table, gazed calmly in front of me, my eyes naturally falling on the fair young man.

He nodded significantly to the older man, and held out his hand to me. I shook hands with him, and went through the same ceremony with the other.

"Ah!" said the young man, speaking in French, "you got her letter?"

I nodded.

"And you are willing?"

The first maxim for a would-be adventurer is always to say "yes" to questions. A "no," is fatal to further progress.

"Yes," I answered.

"It will be made worth your while, of course," he went on.

I thought I ought to resent this suggestion.

"Sir," I said, "you cannot possibly mean to suggest—"

The young man laughed pleasantly.

"My dear fellow," he said, "ladies have their own ways of paying debts. If you don't like it—" and he shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh," said I, smiling, "I misunderstood you."

"It is, of course," said the older man, speaking for the first time, and in a loud whisper, "of vital importance that His Royal Highness' name should not appear."

This really began to be mysterious and interesting. I nodded.

"That goes without saying," said the young man. "And you'll be ready?"

"Ready!" I said. "But when?"

"Didn't I tell you? Oh, six o'clock tomorrow morning."

"That's early hours."

"Well, you must, you know," he answered.

"And," added the older man, "the countess hopes you'll come to breakfast afterward at ten."

"I'll be there, never fear," said I, "and it's very kind."

"Bravo!" said the young man, clapping me on the shoulder (for we had risen from table). "You take it the right way."

As may be supposed, I was rather puzzled by this time, and decidedly vexed to find I should have to be up so early. Still, the mention of His Royal Highness and the countess decided me to go on for the present; probably the real man—for, unless it were all a mad joke, there must be a real man—would appear in the course of the evening. I only

hoped my new friends would, in their turn, take it in the right way when that happened.

"Have you a servant with you?" asked the young man, as we said good-night.

"No," said I; "I am quite alone."

"You are a paragon of prudence," he answered, smiling. "Well, I'll call you, and we'll slip out quietly."

Just as I was getting into bed, the waiter knocked at my door and gave me a note. It bore no address.

"Is it for me?" I asked.

"Yes, sir," he answered. "You are the gentleman who dined with Herr Vooght and M. Dumergue?"

I supposed I was, and opened the note.

"You are generous and forgiving, indeed," it said (and said it in English). "What reward will you claim? But do be careful. He is dangerous.—M."

"The devil!" I exclaimed.

The next morning I was aroused at five o'clock by my two friends.

"Good-morning, Herr Vooght," said I, looking just between them.

"Good-morning," answered the older man.

"Now, my dear fellow, come along. There's a cup of coffee downstairs," said the other, whom I took to be Dumergue.

After coffee, we got into a close carriage with a pair of horses, and drove two or three miles into the country; my companions said little. Dumergue twice asked in a joking way how I felt, and Vooght puzzled me very much by remarking:

"They are bringing all the necessaries; but I don't know what they will choose."

When this was said, Dumergue was humming a tune. He went on for five minutes, and then said, with a touch of scorn:

"My good Vooght, they know our friend's reputation. They will choose pistols."

I could not repress a start. No doubt it was stupid of me not to have caught the meaning of this early expedition before, but it really never struck me that our business might be a duel. However, so it seemed, and apparently I was one of the principals. Dumergue noticed my little start.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"Do they know my name?" said I.

"My dear friend, could you expect the baron to fight with an unknown man? The challenge had to be in your name."

I had clearly been the challenger. I was consumed with curiosity to know what the grievance was, and how the countess was concerned in the matter.

"The countess assured us," said Vooght, "that she had your authority."

"As fully as if I had been there," I answered, and Dumergue resumed his tune.

I was sincerely glad that the name of my original had been given, for his reputation for swordsmanship had evidently saved me from a hole in my skin. I was a fair hand with a pistol; but, like most of my countrymen, a mere bungler with the rapier. It was very annoying, though, that my friends' exaggerated prudence prevented them mentioning my name: it would have been more convenient to know who I was.

I had not long for reflection, for we soon drew up by a roadside inn, and, getting out of the carriage, walked through the house, where we were apparently expected, into a field behind. There were three men walking up and down, and two of them at once advanced to meet Vooght and Dumergue. I remained where I was, merely raising my hat, and the third man—a big, burly fellow, with a heavy black mustache—followed my example.

This one, no doubt, was the baron. To be frank, he looked a brute, and I had very little hesitation in assuming that the merits of the quarrel must be on my side. I was comforted by this conclusion, as I had no desire to shoot an unoffending person. Preliminaries were soon concluded. I overheard one of the baron's representatives mention the word apology, and add that they would meet us halfway, but Dumergue shook his head decisively. This defiant attitude became Dumergue very well; but I, for my part, should have been open to reason.

The baron and I were placed opposite one another at twelve paces. There were to be two shots—unless, of course, one of us were disabled at the first fire; after that, the seconds were to consider whether the matter need go further.

The word was just about to be given, when to my surprise the baron cried:

"Stop!"

Everyone looked at him in astonishment.

"Before we fire," he went on, "I wish to ask this gentleman one question. No—I will not be stopped!"

His seconds, who had advanced, fell back before his resolute gesture, and he continued, addressing me:

"Sir, will you do me the honor to answer one question? Are you the person who accompanied—"

Vooght struck in quickly:

"No names, please!"

The baron bowed, and began again.

"On your honor, sir, are you the gentleman who accompanied the lady in question to the masked ball on the night in question?"

These gentlemen were all diplomatic. I thought I would be diplomatic too.

"Surely this is grossly irregular?" I said, appealing to my supporters.

"I ask for an answer," said the baron.

"It's nothing but a new insult," said I.

"I have my reasons, and those gentlemen know them."

This was intolerable.

"You mean to fight, or you don't, M. le Baron," said I. "Which is it?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Your master is well served," he said with a sneer.

His seconds looked bewildered: Vooght bit his nails, and Dumergue swore furiously, and, coming near me, whispered in my ear:

"Shoot straight! Stop his cursed mouth for him!"

I had not the least intention of killing the baron, if I could avoid it without being killed myself; but I thought a slight lesson would improve his manners, and, when the word came, I fired with a careful aim. He evidently meant mischief, for I heard his ball whiz past my ear; I missed him clean, being much out of practice, and, I dare say, rather nervous. I pulled myself together for the second shot, for I saw that my opponent was not to be trifled with, and I should not have been the least surprised to find myself in paradise the next moment. On the word I fired: the baron fell back with a cry, and simultaneously

I felt a tingle in my left hand, and the unmistakable warm ooze of blood. The witnesses ran to my opponent, and raised his head. Dumergue turned round to me:

"Are you hurt?"

"A scratch," I answered, for I found the ball had run up my arm, merely grazing me in its passage.

A hurried consultation followed; then Vooght and Dumergue raised their hats and joined me.

"We had best be off," said Vooght.

"Is he dead?" I asked.

"No," said Dumergue, with a little disappointment, I thought. "He'll get over it; but he's safe for a week or two. Not a bad shot, colonel!"

So I was a colonel!

"Now," said Vooght, "we'll drive back, and send you to the countess."

I had made up my mind to get away from the place as soon as I could, but my curiosity to see the *causa belli* was too strong, and I said I should be delighted to keep my engagement.

Dumergue smiled significantly, and Vooght hurried us into the carriage. We drove back to the town, and then two or three miles into the country again, till we came to a pretty villa, embowered in trees, and standing some two hundred yards back from the road. There was no drive up to the house, a turf walk forming the passage from the highway. Vooght motioned me to get down.

"Don't you accompany me?" I asked.

Dumergue smiled again.

"Oh, no!" he said. "Come for us at the hotel, and we'll all be off by the two o'clock train."

"Unless you are detained," added Vooght.

"I shouldn't be detained, if I were you," said Dumergue dryly. "Who knows? The baron may die!"

I was quite determined not to be detained, and said so. I was also quite determined not to keep the rendezvous at the hotel, but to slip away quietly by myself. The colonel might arrive at any moment.

I watched my friends drive off, and then walked briskly up to the house. A man in livery met me before I had time to ring.

"Are you the gentleman?" he asked.

I nodded.

"Will you be so kind, sir, as to walk straight in? That door, sir. The countess expects you."

I had my doubts about that, but I walked in, shutting the door swiftly behind me, lest the servant should hear anything. I thought an explosion not improbable.

The room was dim, close curtains shutting out the growing strength of the sunshine. The air was thick with the scent of flowers that overpowered without quite smothering the appetizing smell rising from a table profusely spread for breakfast. I had entered softly, and had time to take note of the surroundings before I became aware of a tall, slight figure in white, first moving impetuously toward me, then stopping abruptly in surprise. Presumably, this was the countess. Charming as she was, with her open blue eyes, fluffy golden hair, and fresh tints, I wondered from what noble house she sprang. However, the fountains of honor are many, and their streams meander sometimes through very winding channels.

The countess stood and looked at me. I bowed and smiled.

"You are naturally surprised," I said, in my smoothest tone.

"I was expecting—another gentleman."

"Yes, I know. I come in his place."

"In his place?" she repeated, in incredulous tones.

"Yes; in the colonel's place."

"Hush!" she exclaimed. "We needn't mention names."

It suited me perfectly not to mention names.

"I beg pardon," I murmured.

"But how is it possible?" she asked. "Do you know what he was to come for?"

"Oh, yes!"

"And he hasn't come?"

"No."

She frowned.

"Wouldn't he come?"

"He couldn't. So I came."

"But how did you know anything about it? Did he tell you about the pr—about the affair?"

"No. I only heard—"

"From him?"

"Yes—that you wanted a champion."

"Oh, that's absurd! Why, you never heard of me!"

"Ah, indeed I have!"

"And—did you recognize me under my new name?"

"Your—"

"My—my title. You know."

"The—he told me that. Must I confess? I jumped at the chance of serving you."

"You had never seen me!"

"Perhaps I had seen your photograph."

She smiled at this, but still looked perturbed.

"Pray don't be distressed," said I. "I am very discreet."

"Oh, I hope so! The prince [she spoke in a whisper] was so urgent about discretion. You haven't seen him?"

"The prince? No."

"And—when is it to be?"

"I don't quite understand." This was my first truthful remark.

"Why, the duel!"

"Oh, it's all over!"

"Over!"

"Yes—two hours ago."

"And the baron? No, forgive me. You! Are you hurt?"

"Not a bit. He's hurt."

"Is he dead?" she asked breathlessly.

"I am sorry, countess. Not quite. Was that necessary?"

"Oh, no! Though he deserved it. He insulted me shamefully."

"Then he did deserve it."

She went off at a tangent.

"What became of my letter?"

"They gave it to me. You only said for the gentleman who dined with your friends."

"Then you read it?" she asked, blushing.

"Yes. How I wish I were the rightful owner of it!"

"Why didn't he come?" she asked again.

"He's going to write and explain."

"And you really came because—"

"May I tell you already? Or have you guessed already?"

She blushed again.

"I don't see what else the prince could do, you know," she said. "He ought, of course, never to have gone to the ball at all."

"Perhaps not," I answered; "but I suppose he was tempted."

"Do you think very badly of me?"

"I should think you perfection if—"

"Well?"

"You would give me some breakfast."

"Oh, what a shame! You're starving! And after all you have done! Come, I'll wait on you."

My meal was very pleasant. The lady was charming; she satisfied every feeling I had, except curiosity. She was clearly English; equally clearly she was involved with some great people on the Continent. I gathered that the baron had insulted her, when she was with the prince, and the latter could not, whether for state or domestic reasons, espouse the quarrel. So far I got, but no farther.

"What a debt I owe you!" she said, as she led the way after breakfast to the top of a little tower. An awning was spread overhead, and armchairs on the floor. A cool breeze blew, and stirred her hair.

"I am more than paid!"

"Fancy, if you had been hurt!"

"Better I than the colonel!" I suggested.

She darted a smile at me.

"Oh, well," she said, "you came, and he didn't. I like you best."

It was all very charming, but time was flying, and I began to plan a graceful exit.

"You make it hard to go," I said.

"Yes, I suppose we must go as soon as possible. Herr Vooght said at two o'clock."

I was startled. Delightful as she was, I hardly reckoned on her being one of the party.

"The prince will be so pleased to see you," she went on.

"Will he?"

"Why, you will have my recommendation!"

"I'm sure it must be all-powerful!"

"But we have two hours before we need start. You must want to rest."

"What a charming tower this is!"

"Yes; such a view. Look, we can see for miles. Only I hate that stretch of dusty road."

I looked carelessly toward the road along which we had come.

"Look what a dust!" she said. "It's a carriage! Oh, they'll upset!"

I jumped up. About half a mile off, I saw a carriage and pair driven furiously toward the villa. My heart beat.

"Who can it be?" she said.

"Don't be frightened," said I. "Possibly the authorities have found out about the duel."

"Oh!"

"Let me go and see."

"Take care!"

"And in case I have to slip away—"

"I shall go alone. You will join us?"

"Yes. But now, in case—"

"Well?"

"As a reward, may I kiss your hand?"

She gave it me.

"I am glad you came," she said. "Stay, perhaps it's only our friends coming for us."

"I'll go and see."

I was reluctant to cut short our good-by,—for I feared it must be final,—but no time was to be lost. With another kiss—and upon my honor, I can't swear whether it was her hand or her cheek this time—I rushed downstairs, seized my hat and cane, and dived into the shrubberies that bordered on the turf walk. Quickly I made my way to within twenty yards of the road, and stopped, motionless and completely hidden by the trees. At that moment the carriage, with its smoking horses, drew up at the gate.

Dumergue got out; Vooght came next; then a tall, powerful man, of military bearing. No doubt this was the colonel. They seemed in a hurry; motioning the driver to wait, they walked or almost ran past me up the path. The moment they were by me and round a little curve, I hastened to the gate, and burst upon the driver.

"A hundred marks to the station!"

"But, sir, I am engaged."

"Damn you! Two hundred!" I cried.

"Get in," said he, like a sensible man, bundling back the nosebags

he was just putting on his horses. I leaped in, he jumped on the box, and off we flew quicker even than they had come. As we went, I glanced up at the tower. They were there! I saw Vooght and Dumergue lean over for a moment, and then turn as if to come down. The tall stranger stood opposite the lady, and seemed to be talking to her.

"Faster!" I cried, and faster and faster we went, till we reached the station. Flinging the driver his money, I took a ticket for the first train, and got in, hot and breathless. As we steamed out of the town, I saw, from my carriage-window, a neat barouche with a woman and three men in it, driving quickly along the road, which ran by the railway. It was my party! Youth is vain, and beauty is powerful. I bared my head, leaned out of the window, and kissed my hand to the countess. We were not more than thirty yards apart, and, to my joy, I saw her return my salutation, with a toss of her head and a defiant glance at her companions. The colonel sat glum and still; Vooght was biting his nails harder than ever; Dumergue shook his fist at me, but, I thought, more in jest than in anger. I kissed my hand again as the train and the carriage whisked by one another, and I was borne on my way out of their reach.

II

AT THE HÔTEL MAGNIFIQUE

To a reflective mind nothing is more curious than the way one thing leads to another. A little experience of this tendency soon cured me of refusing to go anywhere I was asked, merely because the prospects of amusement were not very obvious. I always went—taking credit of course for much amiability—and I often received my reward in an unexpected development of something new or an interesting revival of a former episode. It happened, a few months after my adventure at Heidelberg, that my brother's wife, Jane Jason, asked me, as a favor to herself, to take a stall at the theater where a certain actress was, after a long and successful career in the provinces, introducing herself to a London audience. Jane is possessed by the idea that she has a keen nose for dramatic talent, and she assured me that her *protégée* was a wonder. I dare say the woman had some talent, but she was an ugly, gaunt creature of forty, and did not shine in *Juliet*. At the end of the second act I was bored to death, and was pondering whether I

knew enough of the play to slip out without Jane being likely to discover my desertion by cross-examination, when my eye happened to fall on the stage-box in the first tier. In the center seat sat a fair, rather stout man, with the very weariest expression that I ever saw on human face. He was such an unsurpassed impersonation of boredom that I could not help staring at him; I could do so without rudeness, as his eyes were fixed on the chandelier in the roof of the house. I looked my fill, and was about to turn away, and go out for a cigarette, when somebody spoke to me in a low voice, the tones of which seemed familiar.

"Ah, impostor, here you are!"

It was Dumergue, smiling quietly at me. I greeted him with surprise and pleasure.

"How is the baron?" I asked.

"He cheated the—grave," answered Dumergue.

"And the countess?"

"Hush! I have a message for you."

"From her?" I inquired, not, I fear, without eagerness.

"No," he replied, "from the prince. He desires that you should be presented to him."

"Who is he?"

"I forgot. Prince Ferdinand of Glottenberg."

"Indeed! He's in London, then?"

"Yes, in that box," and he pointed to the bored man, and added:

"Come along; he hates being kept waiting."

"He looks as if he hated most things," I remarked.

"Well, most things are detestable," said Dumergue, leading the way.

The prince rose and greeted me with fatigued graciousness.

"I am very much indebted to you, Mr. Jason," he said, "for—"

I began to stammer an apology for my intrusion into his affairs.

"For," he resumed, without noticing what I said, "a moment's bewilderment. I quite enjoyed it."

I bowed, and he continued.

"The only things I cling to in life, Mr. Jason, are a quiet time at home and my income. You have been very discreet. If you hadn't, I might have lost those two things. I am very much obliged. Will you give me the pleasure of your company at supper? Dumergue, the princess will be delighted to see Mr. Jason?"

"Yes, sir, Her Royal Highness will be delighted," answered Dumergue.

"Where was the princess going?" asked the prince.

"To a meeting of the Women's International Society for the Promotion of Morality, at the Mansion House, sir."

"Mon Dieu!" said the prince.

"His Majesty is much interested in the society, sir."

"I am sure my brother would be. Come along, Mr. Jason."

The prince and princess were staying at the Hôtel Magnifique in Northumberland Avenue. We drove thither, and were told that the princess had returned. Upon further inquiry, made by Dumergue, it appeared that it would be agreeable to her to sup with the prince and to receive Mr. Jason. So we went into the dining room and found her seated by the fire. After greeting me, she said to the prince:

"I have just written a long account of our meeting to the king. He will be so interested."

She was a small woman, with a gentle manner and a low, sweet voice. She looked like an amiable and intelligent girl of eighteen, and had a pretty, timid air, which made me wish to assure her of my respectful protection.

"My brother," said the prince, "is a man of catholic tastes."

"It is necessary in a king, sir," suggested Dumergue.

The prince did not answer him, but offered his arm to his wife, to escort her to the table. She motioned me to sit on her right hand, and began to prattle gently to me about the court of Glottenberg. The prince put in a word here and there, and Dumergue laughed appreciatively whenever the princess' descriptions were neat and appropriate—at least, so I interpreted his delicate flattery.

I enjoyed myself very much. The princess was evidently, to judge from her conversation, a little Puritan, and I always love a pretty Puritan. That rogue Dumergue agreed with all her views, and the prince allowed his silence to pass for assent.

"We do try at court," she ended by saying, "to set an example to society; and, as the king is unmarried, of course I have to do a great deal."

At this moment, a servant entered, bearing a card on a salver. He approached the princess.

"A gentleman desires the honor of an audience with Her Royal Highness," he announced.

"At this time of night!" exclaimed the princess.

"He says his business will not bear delay, and prays for an interview."

"All business will bear delay," said the prince, "and generally be the better for it. Who is he?"

"The Baron de Barbot."

"Oh, I must see him," cried the princess. "Why, he is a dear friend of ours."

I had detected a rapid glance pass between Dumergue and the prince. The latter then answered:

"Yes, we must see Barbot. If you will go to the drawing room, I'll take your message myself."

"That is kind of you," said the princess, retiring.

"Give me the card," said the prince, "and ask the baron to be kind enough to wait a few minutes."

The servant went out, and the prince turned to me.

"Why didn't you kill him, Mr. Jason?" he asked.

"Is it—" I began.

"Yes, it's your baron," said Dumergue.

"It's really a little awkward," said the prince, as though gently remonstrating with fate. "We had arranged it all so pleasantly."

"It would upset the princess," said Dumergue.

"What upsets the princess upsets me," said the prince. "I am a devoted husband, Mr. Jason."

"If there is anything I can do, sir," said I, "rely on me."

"You overwhelm me," said the prince. "Is there anything, Dumergue?"

"Why, yes, sir. Mr. Jason was at the ball. Why should he have fought, if he wasn't?"

"You are right, Dumergue. Mr. Jason, you were at the ball."

"But, sir, I—I don't know anything about the ball."

"It was just like other balls—other *masked* balls," said Dumergue.

"Perhaps a little more so," added the prince, lighting a cigarette.

"There was a scandal at the last one," Dumergue continued, "and the king strictly forbade anyone connected with the court to go, under pain of his severe displeasure. There had been a rumor that a royal prince was at the one before, and consequently—"

"That royal prince was specially commanded not to go to this one," said the prince.

"It was bad enough," resumed Dumergue, "that it should be discovered that the princess' favorite lady-in-waiting, the Countess von Hohstein—"

"Who bore such a high character," interjected the prince.

"Did go, and, moreover, went under the escort of an unknown gentleman—a gentleman whose name she refused to give."

"Was that discovered?" said I.

"It was. This baron detected her, and, with a view, as we have reason to believe, to compelling her companion to declare himself, publicly insulted her."

"Whereupon," said the prince, "you very properly knocked him down, Mr. Jason."

"I beg your pardon, sir?"

"The princess," continued Dumergue, "was terribly agitated and annoyed at the scandal and the duel which followed. And of course the countess left the court, and returned to England."

"To England?"

"Yes; she was a Miss Mason. The king ennobled her at the princess' request."

I smiled and said:

"And now there is a question about who her escort was?"

"There is," said Dumergue. "It is believed that the baron entertains an extraordinary idea that the gentleman in question was no other than—"

"Myself," said the prince, throwing away his cigarette.

I remembered the baron's strange questions before the duel.

"Dispose of me as you please, sir," said I.

"Then you were at the ball, and knocked the baron down!" exclaimed Dumergue.

"A thousand thanks," said the prince.

"But what are we to do with him now, sir?" asked Dumergue. "The princess will be expecting him."

"I will go and tell the princess of Mr. Jason's confession. You go with Mr. Jason, and tell the baron that the princess cannot receive him. I want him to see Mr. Jason."

"But, sir," said I, "I didn't fight under my own name."

The prince was already gone, and Dumergue was halfway down the stairs. I followed the latter.

We found the baron in the smoking room, taking a cup of coffee. A couple of men sat talking on a settee near him; otherwise the room was empty.

Dumergue went up to the baron, I following a step or two behind him. The baron rose and bowed coldly.

"I am charged," said Dumergue, "to express His Royal Highness' regrets that Her Royal Highness cannot have the pleasure of receiving you. She had retired to her apartments."

"The servant told me she was at supper."

"He was misinformed."

"I'm not to be put off like that. I'll have a refusal from the princess herself."

"I will inform His Royal Highness."

The baron was about to answer, when he caught sight of me.

"Ah, there's the jackal!" he said, with a sneer.

I stepped forward.

"Do you refer to me?" I asked.

"Unless I am wrong in recognizing my former antagonist, Colonel Despard."

This was just what I had anticipated. Dumergue did not seem surprised either.

"Of course it is Colonel Despard," he said. "You would not be likely to forget him, baron."

We had been speaking in a low tone, but at Dumergue's sneer, the baron lost his temper. Raising his voice, he said, almost in a shout:

"Then I tell Colonel Despard that he is a mean hound."

If I assumed the colonel's name, I felt I must at least defend it from imputations. I began:

"Once before, baron, I chastised—"

I was interrupted. One of the men on the settee interposed, rising as he spoke.

"I beg pardon, gentlemen, but is it Colonel Despard of the Hussars to whom you refer?"

"Yes," said the baron.

"Then that gentleman is not Colonel Despard," announced our new friend. "I am Colonel Despard's brother-in-law."

For a moment I was at a loss; things were falling out so very unfortunately. Dumergue turned on the stranger fiercely:

"Pray, sir, was your interposition solicited?"

"Certainly not. But if this gentleman says he is Colonel Despard, I take leave to contradict him."

"I should advise you to do nothing of the sort," said I. "M. Dumergue knows me very well."

"This person," said the baron, "passed himself off as Colonel Despard, and, by that pretext, obtained from me the honor of a duel with me. It appears that he is a mere impostor."

The other man on the settee called out cheerfully, "Bob, send for the police!"

Dumergue looked rather sheepish; his invention failed him.

"Do either or both of these gentlemen," said I, indicating the baron and the colonel's brother-in-law, "call me an impostor?"

"I do," said the baron, with a sneering laugh.

"I am compelled to assert it," said the other, with a bow.

I had edged near the little table, on which the baron's coffee had been served. I now took up the coffee-pot and milk-jug. The coffee I threw in the baron's face, and the milk in that of his ally. Both men sprang forward with an oath. At the same moment, the electric light went out, and I was violently pulled back toward the door, and someone whispered, "Vanish as quick as you can. Go home—go anywhere."

"All right, sir," said I, for I recognized the prince's voice. "But what are they doing?"

"Never mind; be off." And the prince handed me a hat.

I walked quickly to the door, and hailed a hansom. As I drove off, I saw the prince skip upstairs, and a *posse* of waiters rush toward the smoking room. I went home to bed.

The next morning, as I was breakfasting, my man told me two gentlemen were below, and wished to see me. I told him to show them up, and the prince and Dumergue came in, the former wrapped up in a fur coat, with a collar that hid most of his face.

"The prince would like some brandy in a little soda water," said Dumergue.

I administered the cordial. The prince drank it, and then turned to me.

"Did you get home all right?" he asked.

"Perfectly, sir."

"After you took leave of us, we had an explanation. Mr. Wetherington—it was Mr. Wetherington at whom you threw the milk—was very reasonable. I explained the whole matter, and he said he was sure his brother-in-law would pardon the liberty."

"I'm afraid I took rather a liberty with him."

"Oh," said Dumergue, "we made him believe the milk was meant for the baron, as well as the coffee. I said we took it *au lait* at Glottenberg."

"It's lucky I thought of turning out the light," said the prince. "I was looking on, and it seemed about time."

"What did the hotel people say, sir?"

"They are going to sue the electric company," said the prince, with a slight smile. "It seems there is a penalty if the light doesn't work properly."

"And the baron, sir?"

"We kicked the baron out as a blackmailer," said Dumergue. "He is going to bring an action."

"I return to Glottenberg today," concluded the prince; "accompanied by the princess and M. Dumergue."

I thought this course very prudent, and said so. "But," I added, "I shall be called as a witness."

"No; Colonel Despard will."

"Well, then—"

"He will establish an *alibi*. *Voilà tout!*"

"I am glad it all ends so happily, sir."

"Well, there is one matter," said the prince. "I had to tell the princess of your indiscretion in taking Mme. Vooght—"

"Who, sir?"

"Mr. Jason," put in Dumergue, "has not heard that the countess and Vooght are married."

"Yes," said the prince, "they are married, and will settle in America. Vooght is a loss; but we can't have everything in this world."

"I hope Herr Vooght will be happy," said I.

"I should think it very unlikely," said the prince. "But, to return. The princess is very angry with you. She insists—"

"That I should never be presented to her again?"

"On the contrary; that you should come and apologize in person.

Only on condition of bringing you again could I make my peace for bringing you once."

I was very much surprised, but of course I said I was at the princess' commands.

"You don't mind meeting us in Paris? We stay there a few days," said Dumergue.

"You see," added the prince, "Dumergue says there are things called writs, and—"

"I will be in Paris tomorrow, sir."

"I shall be there today," said the prince, rising.

III

THE MISSION OF THE RUBY

I COULD not imagine why the princess desired to see me. It would have been much more natural to punish the impertinence of which I had no doubt been guilty—I mean, of which it was agreed on all hands that I had been guilty—by merely declining to receive me or see me again. Even the desire for a written apology would have been treating me as of too much account. But she wanted to see me. What I had heard of the princess' character utterly forbade any idea which ought not to have been, but would have been, pleasant to entertain. No; she clearly wanted me, but what for I could not imagine.

When I went to claim my audience, the prince was not visible, nor Dumergue either, and I was at once received by the princess alone. She was looking smaller, and more simple and helpless than ever. I also thought her looking prettier, and I enjoyed immensely the pious, severe, forgiving little rebuke which she administered to me. I humbly craved pardon, and had no difficulty in obtaining it. Indeed, she became very gracious.

"You must come to Glottenberg," she said, "in a few months' time."

"To obey Your Royal Highness' commands will be a delightful duty," said I, bowing.

She rose and stood by the fire, "toying" (as the novelists say) with her fan.

"You seem to be an obliging man, Mr. Jason," she said. "You were ready to oblige Mme. Vooght."

I made a gesture of half-serious protest.

"I wonder," she continued, "if you would do me a little service."

"I shall be most honored if I may hope to be able to," said I. What did she want?

She blushed slightly, and, with a nervous laugh, said:

"It's only a short story. When I was a young girl, I was foolish enough, Mr. Jason, to fall in love, or at least to think I did. There was a young English *attaché*—I know I can rely on your perfect discretion—at my father's court, and he—he forgot the difference between us. He was a man of rank, though. Well, I was foolish enough to accept from him a very valuable ring—a fine ruby—quite a family heirloom. Of course, I never wore it, but I took it. And when I married, I—"

She paused.

"Your Royal Highness had no opportunity of returning it?"

"Exactly. He had left the court. I didn't know where he was, and —and the post was not quite trustworthy."

"I understand perfectly."

"I saw in the papers the other day that he was married. Of course I can't keep it. His wife ought to have it—and I dare not—I would prefer not to—send it."

"I see. You would wish me—"

"To be my messenger. Will you?"

Of course I assented. She went into an adjoining room, and returned with a little morocco case. Opening it, she showed me a magnificent ruby, set in an old gold ring of great beauty.

"Will you give it him?" she said.

"Your Royal Highness has not told me his name?"

"Lord Daynesborough. You will be able to find him?"

"Oh, yes!"

"And you will—you *will* be careful, Mr. Jason?"

"He shall have it safely in three days. Any message with it, madame?"

"No. Yes—just my best wishes for his happiness."

I bowed and prepared to withdraw.

"And you must come and tell me—"

"I will come and make my report."

"I do not know how to thank you."

I kissed her hand and bowed myself out, mightily amused, and, maybe, rather touched at the revelation of this youthful romance. Somehow such things are always touching, stupid as they are for the most part. It pleased me to find that the little princess was flesh and blood.

She followed me to the door, and whispered, as I opened it:

"I have not troubled the prince with the matter."

"Wives are so considerate," thought I, as I went downstairs.

On arriving in England, I made inquiries about Lord Daynesborough. I found that it was seven years since he had abruptly thrown up his post of *attaché,* without cause assigned. After this event, he lived in retirement for some time, and then returned into society. Three months ago he had married Miss Dorothy Codrington, a noted beauty, with whom he appeared much in love, and had just returned from his wedding tour and settled down for the season at his house in Curzon Street. Hearing all this, I thought the little princess might have let well alone, and kept her ring; but her conduct was no business of mine, and I set about fulfilling my commission. I needed no one to tell me that Lady Daynesborough had better, as the princess would have phrased it, not be troubled with the matter.

I had no difficulty in meeting the young lord. In spite of the times we live in, a Jason is still a welcome guest in most houses, and before long he and I were sitting side by side at Mrs. Closmadene's table. The ladies had withdrawn, and we were about to follow them upstairs. Daynesborough was a frank, pleasant fellow, and scorned the affectation of concealing his happiness in the married state. In fact, he seemed to take a fancy to me, and told me that he would like me to come and see him at home.

"Then," he said, "you will cease to distrust marriage."

"I shall be most glad to come," I answered, "more especially as I want a talk with you."

"Do you? About what?"

"I have a message for you."

"You have a message for me, Mr. Jason? Forgive me, but from whom?"

I leaned over toward him, and whispered, "The Princess Ferdinand of Glottenberg."

The man turned as white as a sheet, and, gripping my hand, said under his breath:

"Hush! Surely you—you haven't—she hasn't sent it?"

"Yes, she has," said I.

"Good God! After seven years!"

General Closmadene rose from his chair. Daynesborough drank off a very large "white-wash," and added:

"Come to dinner tomorrow—eight o'clock. We shall be alone; and, for Heaven's sake, say nothing."

I said nothing, and I went to dinner, carrying the ruby ring in my breast-pocket. But I began to wonder whether the little princess was quite as childlike as she seemed.

Lady Daynesborough dined with us. She was a tall, slender girl; very handsome, and, to judge from her appearance, not wanting in resolution and character. She was obviously devoted to her husband, and he treated her with an affectionate deference that seemed to me almost overdone. It was like the manner of a man who is remorseful for having wounded someone he loves.

When she left us, he returned to the table, and, with a weary sigh, said:

"Now, Mr. Jason, I am ready."

"My task is a very short one," said I. "I have no message except to convey to you the princess' best wishes for your happiness on your marriage, of which she has recently heard, and to give you the ring. Here it is."

"Have women no mercy?" groaned he.

"I beg your pardon?" said I, rather startled.

"She waits seven years—seven years without a word or a sign—and then sends it! And why?"

"Because you're married."

"Exactly. Isn't it—devilish?"

"Not at all. It's strictly correct. She said herself that your wife was the proper person to have the ring now."

He looked at me with a bitter smile.

"My dear Jason," he said, "I have been flattering your acumen at the expense of your morality. I thought you knew what this meant."

"No more than what the princess told me."

"No, of course not, or you would not have brought it. When we

parted, I gave her the ring, and she made me promise, on my honor as a gentleman, to come to her the moment she sent the ring—to leave everything and come to her, and take her away. And I promised."

"And she has never sent till now?"

"I never married till now," he said bitterly. "What's the matter with her?"

"Nothing that I know of."

He rose, went to a writing table, and came back with a fat paper book—a Continental Bradshaw.

"You're not going?" I exclaimed.

"Oh, yes! I promised."

"You promised something to your wife too, didn't you?"

"I can't argue it. I must go and see what she wants. I—I hope she'll let me come back."

I tried to dissuade him. I know I told him he was a fool; I think I told him he was a scoundrel. I was not sure of the second, but I thought it wisest to pretend that I was.

"I hope it will be all right," he said, again and again; "but, right or wrong, I must go."

I took an immediate resolution.

"I suppose you'll go by the eleven-o'clock train to Paris tomorrow?"

"Yes," he said.

"Well, you're wrong. Good-night."

At twelve o'clock the next day I called in Curzon Street, and sent in my card to Lady Daynesborough.

She saw me at once. I expect that she fancied I had something to do with her husband's sudden departure. She was looking pale and dispirited, and I rather thought she had been crying. Her husband, it appeared, had told her that he had to go to Paris on business, and would be back in three days.

"He didn't tell you what it was?"

"No. Some public affairs, I understood."

"Lady Daynesborough," said I, "you hardly know me, but my name tells you I am a gentleman."

She looked at me in surprise.

"Why, of course, Mr. Jason. But what has that to do—"

"I can't explain. But, if you are wise, you will come with me to Paris."

"Go with you to Paris! Oh! is he in danger?"

"In danger of making a fool of himself. Now, I'll say nothing more. Will you come?"

"It will look very strange."

"Very."

"In fact—most unusual."

"Most."

"Won't there be a—a—scandal, if—"

"Sure to be. Will you come?"

"You must have a reason," she said. "I will come."

We started that evening, nine hours after My Lord, going separately to the station, and meeting on the boat. All through the journey she scarcely spoke a word. When we were nearing Paris, she asked:

"Do you know where he is?"

"No; but I can trace him," I replied.

So I could. I bought a paper, and found that Prince and Princess Ferdinand had, the day before, proceeded from Paris *en route* for Glottenberg. Of course Daynesborough had followed them.

"We must go on," I said.

"Why?"

"Because your husband has gone on."

She obeyed me like a lamb; but there was a look about her pretty mouth that made me doubt if Daynesborough would find her like a lamb.

We went to the principal hotel in Glottenberg. I introduced Lady Daynesborough as my sister, Miss Jacynth Jason, and stated that she was in weak health, and would keep her room for the present. Then I sallied forth, intent on discovering Dumergue; he would be able to post me up in the state of affairs.

On my way, I met the king taking his daily drive. He was a dour, sour-looking, pasty-faced creature, and I quite understood that he would fail to appreciate many of my prince's characteristics. A priest sat by him, and a bystander told me it was the king's confessor (the Glottenberg family are all of the old church), and added that the king's confessor was no mean power in the state. I asked him where M. Dumergue was lodged, and he directed me to Prince Ferdinand's palace, which stood in a pleasant park in the suburbs of the town.

I found Dumergue in a melancholy condition, though he professed to be much cheered by the sight of me.

"My dear fellow," he said, "you, if anybody, can get us out of this."

"I never knew such people," said I. "What's up now?"

"There has been a—an explosion. Did you ever hear of Daynesborough?"

I said no, and Dumergue told me of the princess' former *penchant* for him.

"Well?" said I.

"Well, she's invited him here, and he's now in the palace. You may imagine the prince's feelings."

"I suppose the prince can turn him out?"

Dumergue shook his head dolefully.

"She holds the trumps," he answered. "Jason, she's a clever woman. We thought we had hoodwinked her. When Daynesborough turned up, looking, I'm bound to say, very sheepish, the prince was really quite annoyed. He told the princess that she must send him away. She refused flatly. 'Then I shall consult my brother,' says the prince. 'I shall consult the king too,' said the princess. 'It's indecent,' said he. 'It's not as bad as taking my ladies to masked balls in disguise,' she answered. 'Oh, you think you imposed on me—you and that clumsy young animal (forgive me, my dear fellow), Jason. I am not an idiot. I knew all the time. And now the king will know too—unless Lord Daynesborough stays just as long as I like.' "

"Confound her!" said I.

"There it is," he went on. "The prince is furious, the princess triumphant, and Daynesborough in possession."

"What does he mean to do?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Who can tell? She's a little devil. Fancy pretending to be deceived, and then turning on us like this! You should have heard her describe you, my boy!" and Dumergue chuckled in sad pleasure.

I object to being ridiculed, especially by women. I determined to take a hand in the game. I wondered if they knew that Daynesborough was married.

"I suppose this young Daynesborough enjoys himself?"

"Well, he ought to. He's got nothing to lose; but he seems a melancholy, glum creature. I think he must be one of the king's kidney."

"Or married, perhaps?" I suggested airily.

"Oh, no! She wouldn't have him here, if he were married."

I saw that Dumergue did not yet appreciate the princess in whose household he had the honor to serve.

"She won't compromise herself, I suppose?"

"Not she!" he replied regretfully. "She may compromise the prince."

I rebuked him for his cynicism, and promised to consider and let him know if anything occurred to me. My hope lay in Daynesborough. I could see that he was *galant malgré lui,* and I thought I could persuade him that he had done all that his mistaken promise fairly entailed on him; or, if I could not convince him, I had a suspicion that his wife might, could, and would, in a very peremptory fashion, if I brought about an encounter between them. I was full of eagerness, for, apart from my zeal in the cause of morality and domestic happiness, I did not approve of being called a clumsy young animal. It was neither true nor witty; and surely abuse ought to be one or the other, if it is to be distinguished from mere vulgar scurrility.

I have been told, by those who know the place, that Glottenberg is not, as a rule, a very exciting residence. But for the next four-and-twenty hours I, at least, had no reason to grumble at a lack of incidents.

The play began, if I may so express myself, by the princess sending for the doctor. The doctor, having heard from the princess what she wanted to do, told her what she ought to do; of course I speak from conjecture. He prescribed a visit to her country villa for a week or two, plenty of fresh air, complete repose, and freedom from worry. Dumergue told me that the princess considered that the terms of this prescription entailed a temporary separation from her husband, and that the prince had agreed to remain in Glottenberg. The princess started for her villa at twelve o'clock on Wednesday morning. The distance was but fifteen miles, and she traveled by road in her own carriage, although the main line of railway from Glottenberg to Paris passed within two miles of her destination.

At one o'clock Lord Daynesborough was received by Prince Ferdinand, having requested an interview for the purpose of taking his leave, as he left for Paris by the five o'clock train. Everybody knew that the prince and Daynesborough were not on cordial terms; but this fact hardly explained Daynesborough's extreme embarrassment and obvious discomfort during the brief conversation. Dumergue

escorted him from the prince's presence, and said that he was shaking like an aspen-leaf or an ill-made blanc-mange.

At three o'clock I went to the hotel, and had an interview with Lady Daynesborough. I then returned to the palace, and made a communication to the prince. The prince was distinctly perturbed.

"I never thought she would go so far," he said. "It's not that she cares twopence about Daynesborough."

"To what, then, sir, do you attribute—"

"Temper! all temper, Mr. Jason! She is angry about that wretched ball, and she wants to anger me."

"Her Royal Highness is, however, giving a handle to her enemies," I ventured to suggest.

"She must come back tonight," said he. "I won't be made to look like a fool."

"My plan will, I hope, dispose of Lord Daynesborough. If so, Your Royal Highness might join the princess."

"I shan't do anything of the sort. I shall have her brought back."

Apparently there was a reserve of resolution latent somewhere in this indolent gentleman.

"Will you go yourself, sir?"

"No. You must do it."

"I, sir? Surely, M. Dumergue—"

"Dumergue's afraid of her. Will you bring her back?"

"Supposing she won't come?"

"I didn't request you to ask her to come. I requested you to bring her."

I looked at him inquiringly. He inhaled a mouthful of smoke, and added, with a nod:

"Yes, if necessary."

"Will Your Royal Highness hold me harmless from the king—or the law?"

"No. I can't. Will you do it?"

"With pleasure, sir."

At ten minutes to five, Lady Daynesborough, heavily veiled, and I drove up to the station in a hired cab, and hid ourselves in the third-class waiting room. At five minutes to five, Lord Daynesborough arrived. He wore a scarf up to his nose, and a cap down to his eyes, and walked to the station, unattended and without luggage. He got into a

second-class smoking carriage—one of the long compartments divided into separate boxes by intervening partitions reaching within a yard of the roof, a gang-way running down the middle. On seeing him enter, I caught the guard, gave him twenty marks, and told him to admit no one except myself and my companion into that carriage. Then I hauled Lady Daynesborough in, and we sat down at the opposite end to that occupied by her husband.

The train started. It was only five-and-twenty minutes' run to the station for the princess' villa. There was no time to lose.

"Are you ready?" I whispered.

"Yes," she answered, her voice trembling a little.

We rose, walked along, and sat down opposite to Lord Daynesborough. He was looking out of the window, although it was dark, and did not turn.

"Lord Daynesborough," said I, "you have forgotten your ticket." And I held out a through ticket to Paris.

He started as if he had been shot.

"Who the devil—" he began. "Jason!"

"Yes," said I. "Here's your ticket."

"I thought you were in England," he gasped.

"No, I am here."

"Spying on my actions?"

"Acquainted with them."

"I'll have no interference, sir. If you know me, you will kindly be silent, and leave me to myself."

Time was passing.

"You are going to Paris with this lady," said I.

"You're insolent, sir—you and your—"

"Don't say what you'll regret. She's your wife."

Well, of course he was very much in the wrong, and looked uncommonly ridiculous to boot. Still, the way he collapsed was rather craven. I withdrew for five minutes. Then I returned, and held out the ticket again. He took it.

"If you will leave us for five minutes, Lady Daynesborough?"

She went into the next box. Then I said:

"Now, we've only ten minutes. We're going to change clothes. Be quick."

I took off my coat.

"By God, I'll not stand this!"

And he rose.

In a moment I had him by the collar, and was presenting a pistol at his head.

"No nonsense!" I whispered. "Off with them!"

He might have known I would not shoot him in his wife's presence; but I could and would have undressed him with my own hands. Perhaps he guessed this.

"Let me go," he muttered.

I released him, and he took off his coat.

The train began to slacken speed. I called to Lady Daynesborough, who rejoined us.

"You have fulfilled your promise," said I to the young man. "And," I added, turning to her, "I have fulfilled mine. Good-night!"

I opened the door, and jumped out as we entered the station. I stood waiting till the train started again, but Lord Daynesborough remained in his place. I wonder what passed on that journey. She was a plucky girl, and I can only trust she gave him what he deserved. At any rate, he never, so far as I heard, ran away again.

I asked my way to the villa, and reached it after half an hour's walking. I did not go in by the lodge gates, but climbed the palings, and reached the door by way of the shrubberies. I knocked softly. A man opened the door instantly. He must have been waiting.

"Is it Milord?" he said in French.

"Yes," I answered, entering rapidly.

"You are expected, Milord."

I did not know his voice, and it was dark in the passage.

"I am wet," I said. "Take me to a fire."

"There is one in the pantry," he answered, leading the way.

We reached the pantry, and he turned to light the gas.

Looking at me in the full blaze, he started back, then scrutinized me closely, then exclaimed:

"What? You are not—"

"Oh, yes, I am! I am Lord Daynesborough."

"It's a lie. You are a robber—a—"

"I am Lord Daynesborough—Lord Daynesborough—Lord Daynesborough."

At each repetition I advanced a step nearer; at the last I produced

my trusty pistol, at the same time holding out a bank-note in the other hand.

He took the note.

"You will stay here," I said, "for the next two hours. You will not come out, whatever happens. Is there anyone else in the house?"

"One maid, Milord, and a man in the stables."

"Where is the maid?"

"In the kitchen."

"Is the man within hearing?"

"No."

"Good! Is the princess upstairs?"

"She is, Milord."

I made him direct me to the room, and left him. I thought I would neglect the maid, and go straight to work. I went up to the door to which I had been directed, and knocked.

"Come in!" said the gentle, childlike voice.

I went in. The princess was lying on a sofa by the fire, reading a paper-covered book. She turned her head with a careless glance.

"Ah, you have come! Well, I almost hoped you would be afraid. I really don't want you."

This reception would probably have annoyed Lord Daynesborough.

"Why should I be afraid?" I asked, mimicking Daynesborough's voice as well as I could.

Meanwhile I quietly locked the door.

"Why, because of your wife. I know you tremble before her."

I advanced to the sofa.

"I have no wife," I said; "and, seeing what I do, I thank God for it."

She leaped up with a scream, loud and shrill.

A door opposite me opened, and a girl rushing in, crying:

"Madame!"

"Go back!" I said. "Go back!"

She paused, looking bewildered. I walked quickly up to her.

"Go back and keep quiet;" and, taking her by the shoulders, I pushed her back into the next room.

The princess rushed to the other door, and, on finding it locked, screamed again.

"Nobody," I remarked, "should embark on these things who has not good nerves."

She recognized me now. Her fright had been purely physical—I suppose she thought I was a burglar. When she knew me, she came forward in a dignified way, sat down on the sofa, and said:

"Explain your conduct, sir, if you are in a condition to do so."

"I am sober, madame," said I; "and I have two messages for you."

"You present yourself in a strange way. Pray be brief," and she glanced anxiously at the clock.

"Time does not press, madame," said I. "Nobody will come."

"Nobody will— What do you mean? I expect nobody."

"Precisely, madame—and nobody will come."

Her ivory fan broke between her fingers with a sharp click.

"What do you want?" she said.

"To deliver my messages."

"Well?"

"First, Lord Daynesborough offers his apologies for being compelled to leave for Paris without tendering his farewell."

She turned very red, and then very white. But she restrained herself.

"And the other?"

"His Royal Highness requests that you will avail yourself of my escort for an immediate return to Glottenberg."

"And his reasons?"

"Oh, madame, as if I should inquire them!"

"You are merely insolent, sir. I shall not go tonight."

"His Royal Highness was very urgent."

She looked at me for a moment.

"Why had Lord Daynesborough to leave so suddenly?" she asked suspiciously.

"His wife wished it."

"Did she know where he was?"

"Apparently. She followed him to Glottenberg. She arrived there yesterday."

"Now I see—now I understand! I had to deal with a traitor."

"You must bestow trust, if you desire not to be deceived, madame. You dared to use me as a go-between."

"You had had practice in the trade."

The princess had a turn for repartee. I could not have set her right without quite an argument. I evaded the point.

"And yet Your Royal Highness thought me a clumsy animal!"

"Oh," she said, with a slight laugh, "it's wounded *amour propre,* is it? Come, Mr. Jason, I apologize. You are all that is brilliant and delightful—and English."

"Your Royal Highness is too good."

"And now, Mr. Jason, your device being accomplished, I suppose I may bid you good-night?"

"I regret, madame, that I must press the prince's request on your notice."

She sighed her usual impatient, petulant little sigh.

"Oh, you are tiresome! Pray go!"

"I cannot go without you, madame."

"I am not going—and my establishment does not admit of my entertaining gentlemen," she said, with smiling effrontery.

"Your Royal Highness refuses to allow me to attend you to Glottenberg?"

"I order you to leave this room."

"Finally refuses?"

"Go."

"Then I must add that I am commissioned, if necessary, to convey your Royal Highness to Glottenberg."

"To convey me?"

I bowed.

"You dare to threaten me?"

"I follow my instructions. Will you come, madame, or—"

"Well?"

"Will you be taken?"

I was not surprised at her vexation. Dumergue had, in his haste, called her "a little devil." She looked it then.

"You mean," she asked slowly, "that you will use force?"

I bowed.

"Then I yield," she said, after a pause.

I called the maid, and told her to order the carriage in five minutes. The silence was unbroken till it came round. The princess went into her room, and returned in cloak and hat, carrying a large muff. She was smiling.

"Ah, Mr. Jason, what can a woman do, against men? I am ready. We will go alone. The servants can follow."

I handed her into the coach, ordering the coachman to drive fast. He was the only man with us, and we were alone inside.

I began, perhaps stupidly, to apologize for my peremptory conduct. The princess smiled amiably.

"I like a man of resolution," she said, edging, I thought, a trifle nearer me, her hands nestling in her muff.

Apparently she was going to try the effect of amiability. I was prepared for this. She would not tempt me in that way.

"Your Royal Highness is most forgiving."

"Oh, that is my way," she answered, with the kindest possible glance, and she came nearer still.

"You are a most generous foe."

She turned to me with a dazzling smile.

"Don't say *foe,*" she said, with a pretty lingering on the last word. And as she said it, I felt a knife driven hard into my ribs, and the muff dropped to the ground.

"God in heaven!" I cried.

The princess flung herself into the corner of the carriage.

"Ha—ha—ha! Ha—ha—ha!" she laughed, merrily, musically, fiendishly.

I tried to clutch her; I believe I should have killed her, I was half mad. But the blood was oozing fast from the wound—only the knife itself held my life in. Things danced before my eyes, and my hands fell on my lap.

The carriage stopped, the door opened, and the coachman appeared. It was all like a dream to me.

"Take his feet," said the princess. The man obeyed, and between them they lifted, or, rather, hauled and pushed, me out of the carriage, and laid me by the roadside. I was almost in a faint, and the last thing I was conscious of was a pretty, mocking mouth, which said:

"Won't you escort me, Mr. Jason?"—and then added to the coachman. "To Glottenberg—quick!"

I did not die. I was picked up by some good folk, and well tended. Dumergue arrived and looked after me, and in a couple of weeks I was on my legs.

"Now for Glottenberg!" said I.

Dumergue shook his head.

"You won't be admitted to the town."

"Not admitted!"

"No. They have made it up—for the time. There must be no scandal. Come, Jason; surely you see that?"

"She tried to murder me."

"Oh, quite, quite!" said he. "But you can't prosecute her."

"And I am to be turned adrift by the prince?"

"What use would it be to return? No doubt you annoyed her very much."

"I wish you had undertaken the job."

"I know her. I should have ridden outside."

"It is, then, the prince's wish that I should not return?"

"Yes. But he charges me to say that he will never forget your friendly services."

I was disgusted. But I would force myself on no man.

"Then I'll go home."

"That will be much best," he answered, with revolting alacrity.

"I say, Dumergue, what does the princess say about me?"

"She laughs every time your name is mentioned, and—"

"The devil take her!"

"She says you may keep the knife!"

I have it still, a little tortoise-shell-handled thing, with a sharp—a very sharp—point. On the blade is engraved, in German letters, "Sophia." It is a pretty toy, and in its delicacy, its tininess, its elegance, its seeming harmlessness, and its very sharp point, it reminds me much of Princess Ferdinand of Glottenberg.

The Shot

BY ALEXANDER PUSHKIN

(*1799-1837*)

I

We were stationed in the little town of N——. The life of an officer in the army is well known. In the morning, drill and the riding-school; dinner with the Colonel or at a Jewish restaurant; in the evening, punch and cards. In N—— there was not one open house, not a single marriageable girl. We used to meet in each other's rooms, where, except our uniforms, we never saw anything.

One civilian only was admitted into our society. He was about thirty-five years of age, and therefore we looked upon him as an old fellow. His experience gave him great advantage over us, and his habitual taciturnity, stern disposition and caustic tongue produced a deep impression upon our young minds. Some mystery surrounded his existence; he had the appearance of a Russian, although his name was a foreign one. He had formerly served in the Hussars, and with distinction. Nobody knew the cause that had induced him to retire from the service and settle in a wretched little village, where he lived poorly and, at the same time, extravagantly. He always went on foot, and constantly wore a shabby black overcoat, but the officers of our regiment were ever welcome at his table. His dinners, it is true, never consisted of more than two or three dishes, prepared by a retired soldier, but the champagne flowed like water. Nobody knew what his circumstances were, or what his income was, and nobody dared to question him about them. He had a collection of books, consisting chiefly of works on military matters and a few novels. He willingly lent them to us to read, and never asked for them back; on the other hand, he never returned to the owner the books that were lent to him. His principal amusement was shooting with a pistol. The walls of his room

were riddled with bullets, and were as full of holes as a honey-comb. A rich collection of pistols was the only luxury in the humble cottage where he lived. The skill which he had acquired with his favourite weapon was simply incredible; and if he had offered to shoot a pear off somebody's forage-cap, not a man in our regiment would have hesitated to place the object upon his head.

Our conversation often turned upon duels. Silvio—so I will call him—never joined in it. When asked if he had ever fought, he drily replied that he had; but he entered into no particulars, and it was evident that such questions were not to his liking. We came to the conclusion that he had upon his conscience the memory of some unhappy victim of his terrible skill. Moreover, it never entered into the head of any of us to suspect him of anything like cowardice. There are persons whose mere look is sufficient to repel such a suspicion. But an unexpected incident occurred which astounded us all.

One day, about ten of our officers dined with Silvio. They drank as usual, that is to say, a great deal. After dinner we asked our host to hold the bank for a game at faro. For a long time he refused, for he hardly ever played, but at last he ordered cards to be brought, placed half a hundred ducats upon the table, and sat down to deal. We took our places round him, and the play began. It was Silvio's custom to preserve a complete silence when playing. He never disputed, and never entered into explanations. If the punter made a mistake in calculating, he immediately paid him the difference or noted down the surplus. We were acquainted with this habit of his, and we always allowed him to have his own way; but among us on this occasion was an officer who had only recently been transferred to our regiment. During the course of the game, this officer absently scored one point too many. Silvio took the chalk and noted down the correct account according to his usual custom. The officer, thinking that he had made a mistake, began to enter into explanations. Silvio continued dealing in silence. The officer, losing patience, took the brush and rubbed out what he considered was wrong. Silvio took the chalk and corrected the score again. The officer, heated with wine, play, and the laughter of his comrades, considered himself grossly insulted, and in his rage he seized a brass candlestick from the table, and hurled it at Silvio, who barely succeeded in avoiding the missile. We were filled with consternation. Silvio rose, white with rage, and with gleaming eyes, said:

"My dear sir, have the goodness to withdraw, and thank God that this has happened in my house."

None of us entertained the slightest doubt as to what the result would be, and we already looked upon our new comrade as a dead man. The officer withdrew, saying that he was ready to answer for his offence in whatever way the banker liked. The play went on for a few minutes longer, but feeling that our host was no longer interested in the game, we withdrew one after the other, and repaired to our respective quarters, after having exchanged a few words upon the probability of there soon being a vacancy in the regiment.

The next day, at the riding-school, we were already asking each other if the poor lieutenant was still alive, when he himself appeared among us. We put the same question to him, and he replied that he had not yet heard from Silvio. This astonished us. We went to Silvio's house and found him in the courtyard shooting bullet after bullet into an ace pasted upon the gate. He received us as usual, but did not utter a word about the event of the previous evening. Three days passed, and the lieutenant was still alive. We asked each other in astonishment: "Can it be possible that Silvio is not going to fight?"

Silvio did not fight. He was satisfied with a very lame explanation, and became reconciled to his assailant.

This lowered him very much in the opinion of all our young fellows. Want of courage is the last thing to be pardoned by young men, who usually look upon bravery as the chief of all human virtues, and the excuse for every possible fault. But, by degrees, everything became forgotten, and Silvio regained his former influence.

I alone could not approach him on the old footing. Being endowed by nature with a romantic imagination, I had become attached more than all the others to the man whose life was an enigma, and who seemed to me the hero of some mysterious drama. He was fond of me; at least, with me alone did he drop his customary sarcastic tone, and converse on different subjects in a simple and unusually agreeable manner. But after this unlucky evening, the thought that his honour had been tarnished, and that the stain had been allowed to remain upon it in accordance with his own wish, was ever present in my mind, and prevented me treating him as before. I was ashamed to look at him. Silvio was too intelligent and experienced not to observe this and guess the cause of it. This seemed to vex him; at least I observed

once or twice a desire on his part to enter into an explanation with me, but I avoided such opportunities, and Silvio gave up the attempt. From that time forward I saw him only in the presence of my comrades, and our confidential conversations came to an end.

The inhabitants of the capital, with minds occupied by so many matters of business and pleasure, have no idea of the many sensations so familiar to the inhabitants of villages and small towns, as, for instance, the awaiting the arrival of the post. On Tuesdays and Fridays our regimental bureau used to be filled with officers: some expecting money, some letters, and others newspapers. The packets were usually opened on the spot, items of news were communicated from one to another, and the bureau used to present a very animated picture. Silvio used to have his letters addressed to our regiment, and he was generally there to receive them.

One day he received a letter, the seal of which he broke with a look of great impatience. As he read the contents, his eyes sparkled. The officers, each occupied with his own letters, did not observe anything.

"Gentlemen," said Silvio, "circumstances demand my immediate departure; I leave tonight. I hope that you will not refuse to dine with me for the last time. I shall expect you, too," he added, turning towards me. "I shall expect you without fail."

With these words he hastily departed, and we, after agreeing to meet at Silvio's, dispersed to our various quarters.

I arrived at Silvio's house at the appointed time, and found nearly the whole regiment there. All his things were already packed; nothing remained but the bare, bullet-riddled walls. We sat down to table. Our host was in an excellent humour, and his gaiety was quickly communicated to the rest. Corks popped every moment, glasses foamed incessantly, and, with the utmost warmth, we wished our departing friend a pleasant journey and every happiness. When we rose from the table it was already late in the evening. After having wished everybody good-bye, Silvio took me by the hand and detained me just at the moment when I was preparing to depart.

"I want to speak to you," he said in a low voice.

I stopped behind.

The guests had departed, and we two were left alone. Sitting down opposite each other, we silently lit our pipes. Silvio seemed greatly troubled; not a trace remained of his former convulsive gaiety. The

intense pallor of his face, his sparkling eyes, and the thick smoke issuing from his mouth, gave him a truly diabolical appearance. Several minutes elapsed, and then Silvio broke the silence.

"Perhaps we shall never see each other again," said he; "before we part, I should like to have an explanation with you. You may have observed that I care very little for the opinion of other people, but I like you, and I feel that it would be painful to me to leave you with a wrong impression upon your mind."

He paused, and began to knock the ashes out of his pipe. I sat gazing silently at the ground.

"You thought it strange," he continued, "that I did not demand satisfaction from that drunken idiot R——. You will admit, however, that having the choice of weapons, his life was in my hands, while my own was in no great danger. I could ascribe my forebearance to generosity alone, but I will not tell a lie. If I could have chastised R—— without the least risk to my own life, I should never have pardoned him."

I looked at Silvio with astonishment. Such a confession completely astounded me. Silvio continued:

"Exactly so: I have no right to expose myself to death. Six years ago I received a slap in the face, and my enemy still lives."

My curiosity was greatly excited.

"Did you not fight with him?" I asked. "Circumstances probably separated you."

"I did fight with him," replied Silvio: "and here is a souvenir of our duel."

Silvio rose and took from a cardboard box a red cap with a gold tassel and embroidery (what the French call a *bonnet de police*); he put it on—a bullet had passed through it about an inch above the forehead.

"You know," continued Silvio, "that I served in one of the Hussar regiments. My character is well-known to you: I am accustomed to taking the lead. From my youth this has been my passion. In our time dissoluteness was the fashion, and I was the most outrageous man in the army. We used to boast of our drunkenness: I beat in a drinking bout the famous Bourtsoff,[1] of whom Denis Davidoff[2] has sung.

[1] A cavalry officer, notorious for his drunken escapades.
[2] A military poet who flourished in the reign of Alexander I.

Duels in our regiment were constantly taking place, and in all of them I was either second or principal. My comrades adored me, while the regimental commanders, who were constantly being changed, looked upon me as a necessary evil.

"I was calmly enjoying my reputation, when a young man belonging to a wealthy and distinguished family—I will not mention his name—joined our regiment. Never in my life have I met with such a fortunate fellow! Imagine to yourself youth, wit, beauty, unbounded gaiety, the most reckless bravery, a famous name, untold wealth—imagine all these, and you can form some idea of the effect that he would be sure to produce among us. My supremacy was shaken. Dazzled by my reputation, he began to seek my friendship, but I received him coldly and without the least regret he held aloof from me. I took a hatred to him. His success in the regiment and in the society of ladies brought me to the verge of despair. I began to seek a quarrel with him; to my epigrams he replied with epigrams which always seemed to me more spontaneous and more cutting than mine, and which were decidedly more amusing, for he joked while I fumed. At last, at a ball given by a Polish landed proprietor, seeing him the object of the attention of all the ladies, and especially of the mistress of the house, with whom I was upon very good terms, I whispered some grossly insulting remark in his ear. He flamed up and gave me a slap in the face. We grasped our swords; the ladies fainted; we were separated; and that same night we set out to fight.

"The dawn was just breaking. I was standing at the appointed place with my three seconds. With inexplicable impatience I awaited my opponent. The spring sun rose, and it was already growing hot. I saw him coming in the distance. He was walking on foot, accompanied by one second. We advanced to meet him. He approached, holding his cap filled with black cherries. The seconds measured twelve paces for us. I had to fire first, but my agitation was so great that I could not depend upon the steadiness of my hand; and in order to give myself time to become calm, I ceded to him the first shot. My adversary would not agree to this. It was decided that we should cast lots. The first number fell to him, the constant favourite of fortune. He took aim, and his bullet went through my cap. It was now my turn. His life at last was in my hands; I looked at him eagerly, endeavouring to detect if only the faintest shadow of uneasiness. But

he stood in front of my pistol, picking out the ripest cherries from his cap and spitting out the stones, which flew almost as far as my feet. His indifference annoyed me beyond measure. 'What is the use,' thought I, 'of depriving him of life, when he attaches no value whatever to it?' A malicious thought flashed through my mind. I lowered my pistol.

"'You don't seem to be ready for death just at present,' I said to him: 'you wish to have your breakfast; I do not wish to hinder you.'

"'You are not hindering me in the least,' replied he. 'Have the goodness to fire, or just as you please—the shot remains yours; I shall always be ready at your service.'

"I turned to the seconds, informing them that I had no intention of firing that day, and with that the duel came to an end.

"I resigned my commission and retired to this little place. Since then, not a day has passed that I have not thought of revenge. And now my hour has arrived."

Silvio took from his pocket the letter that he had received that morning, and gave it to me to read. Someone (it seemed to be his business agent) wrote to him from Moscow, that a *certain person* was going to be married to a young and beautiful girl.

"You can guess," said Silvio, "who the certain person is. I am going to Moscow. We shall see if he will look death in the face with as much indifference now, when he is on the eve of being married, as he did once with his cherries!"

With these words, Silvio rose, threw his cap upon the floor, and began pacing up and down the room like a tiger in his cage. I had listened to him in silence; strange conflicting feelings agitated me.

The servant entered and announced that the horses were ready. Silvio grasped my hand tightly, and we embraced each other. He seated himself in his *telega,* in which lay two trunks, one containing his pistols, the other his effects. We said good-bye once more, and the horses galloped off.

II

Several years passed, and family circumstances compelled me to settle in the poor little village of M——. Occupied with agricultural pursuits, I ceased not to sigh in secret for my former noisy and careless life. The most difficult thing of all was having to accustom myself to

passing the spring and winter evenings in perfect solitude. Until the hour for dinner I managed to pass away the time somehow or other, talking with the bailiff, riding about to inspect the work, or going round to look at the new buildings; but as soon as it began to get dark, I positively did not know what to do with myself. The few books that I had found in the cupboards and store-rooms, I already knew by heart. All the stories that my housekeeper Kirilovna could remember, I had heard over and over again. The songs of the peasant women made me feel depressed. I tried drinking spirits, but it made my head ache; and moreover, I confess I was afraid of becoming a drunkard from mere chagrin, that is to say, the saddest kind of drunkard, of which I had seen many examples in our district.

I had no near neighbors, except two or three topers, whose conversation consisted for the most part of hiccups and sighs. Solitude was preferable to their society. At last I decided to go to bed as early as possible, and to dine as late as possible; in this way I shortened the evening and lengthened out the day, and I found that the plan answered very well.

Four versts from my house was a rich estate belonging to the Countess B——; but nobody lived there except the steward. The Countess had only visited her estate once, in the first year of her married life, and then she had remained there no longer than a month. But in the second spring of my hermitical life, a report was circulated that the Countess and her husband were coming to spend the summer on her estate. The report turned out to be true, for they arrived at the beginning of June.

The arrival of a rich neighbour is an important event in the lives of country people. The landed proprietors and the people of their household talk about it for two months beforehand, and for three years afterwards. As for me, I must confess that the news of the arrival of a young and beautiful neighbour affected me strongly. I burned with impatience to see her, and the first Sunday after her arrival I set out after dinner for the village of A——, to pay my respects to the Countess and her husband, as their nearest neighbour and most humble servant.

A lackey conducted me into the Count's study, and then went to announce me. The spacious apartment was furnished with every possible luxury. Around the walls were cases filled with books and surmounted by bronze busts; over the marble mantelpiece was a large

mirror; on the floor was a green cloth covered with carpets. Unaccustomed to luxury in my own poor corner, and not having seen the wealth of other people for a long time, I awaited the appearance of the Count with some little trepidation, as a suppliant from the provinces awaits the arrival of the minister. The door opened, and a handsome-looking man, of about thirty-two years of age, entered the room. The Count approached me with a frank and friendly air: I endeavoured to be self-possessed and began to introduce myself, but he anticipated me. We sat down. His conversation, which was easy and agreeable, soon dissipated my awkward bashfulness; and I was already beginning to recover my usual composure, when the Countess suddenly entered, and I became more confused than ever. She was indeed beautiful. The Count presented me. I wished to appear at ease, but the more I tried to assume an air of unconstraint, the more awkward I felt. They, in order to give me time to recover myself and to become accustomed to my new acquaintances, began to talk to each other, treating me as a good neighbour, and without ceremony. Meanwhile, I walked about the room, examining the books and pictures. I am no judge of pictures, but one of them attracted my attention. It represented some view in Switzerland, but it was not the painting that struck me, but the circumstance that the canvas was shot through by two bullets, one planted just above the other.

"A good shot, that!" said I, turning to the Count.

"Yes," replied he, "a very remarkable shot. . . . Do you shoot well?" he continued.

"Tolerably," replied I, rejoicing that the conversation had turned at last upon a subject that was familiar to me. "At thirty paces I can manage to hit a card without fail,—I mean, of course, with a pistol that I am used to."

"Really?" said the Countess, with a look of the greatest interest. "And you, my dear, could you hit a card at thirty paces?"

"Some day," replied the Count, "we will try. In my time I did not shoot badly, but it is now four years since I touched a pistol."

"Oh!" I observed, "in that case, I don't mind laying a wager that Your Excellency will not hit the card at twenty paces: the pistol demands practice every day. I know that from experience. In our regiment I was reckoned one of the best shots. It once happened that I did not touch a pistol for a whole month, as I had sent mine to be mended; and would you believe it, Your Excellency, the first time I

began to shoot again, I missed a bottle four times in succession at twenty paces! Our captain, a witty and amusing fellow, happened to be standing by, and he said to me: 'It is evident, my friend, that your hand will not lift itself against the bottle.' No, Your Excellency, you must not neglect to practise, or your hand will soon lose its cunning. The best shot that I ever met used to shoot at least three times every day before dinner. It was as much his custom to do this, as it was to drink his daily glass of brandy."

The Count and Countess seemed pleased that I had begun to talk.

"And what sort of a shot was he?" asked the Count.

"Well, it was this way with him, Your Excellency: if he saw a fly settle on the wall—you smile, Countess, but, before Heaven, it is the truth. If he saw a fly, he would call out: 'Kouzka, my pistol!' Kouzka would bring him a loaded pistol—bang! and the fly would be crushed against the wall."

"Wonderful!" said the Count. "And what was his name?"

"Silvio, Your Excellency."

"Silvio!" exclaimed the Count, starting up. "Did you know Silvio?"

"How could I help knowing him, Your Excellency: we were intimate friends; he was received in our regiment like a brother officer, but it is now five years since I had any tidings of him. Then Your Excellency also knew him?"

"Oh, yes, I knew him very well. Did he ever tell you of one very strange incident in his life?"

"Does Your Excellency refer to the slap in the face that he received from some blackguard at a ball?"

"Did he tell you the name of this blackguard?"

"No, Your Excellency, he never mentioned his name. . . . Ah! Your Excellency!" I continued, guessing the truth: "pardon me . . . I did not know . . . could it really have been you?"

"Yes, I myself," replied the Count, with a look of extraordinary agitation; "and that bullet-pierced picture is a memento of our last meeting."

"Ah, my dear," said the Countess, "for Heaven's sake, do not speak about that; it would be too terrible for me to listen to."

"No," replied the Count: "I will relate everything. He knows how I insulted his friend, and it is only right that he should know how Silvio revenged himself."

The Count pushed a chair towards me, and with the liveliest interest I listened to the following story:

"Five years ago I got married. The first month—the honeymoon—I spent here, in this village. To this house I am indebted for the happiest moments of my life, as well as for one of its most painful recollections.

"One evening we went out together for a ride on horseback. My wife's horse became restive; she grew frightened, gave the reins to me, and returned home on foot. I rode on before. In the courtyard I saw a travelling carriage, and I was told that in my study sat waiting for me a man, who would not give his name, but who merely said that he had business with me. I entered the room and saw in the darkness a man, covered with dust and wearing a beard of several days' growth. He was standing there, near the fireplace. I approached him, trying to remember his features.

" 'You do not recognize me, Count?' said he, in a quivering voice.

" 'Silvio!' I cried, and I confess that I felt as if my hair had suddenly stood on end.

" 'Exactly,' continued he. 'There is a shot due to me, and I have come to discharge my pistol. Are you ready?'

"His pistol protruded from a side pocket. I measured twelve paces and took my stand there in that corner, begging him to fire quickly, before my wife arrived. He hesitated, and asked for a light. Candles were brought in. I closed the doors, gave orders that nobody was to enter, and again begged him to fire. He drew out his pistol and took aim. . . . I counted the seconds . . . I thought of her . . . A terrible minute passed! Silvio lowered his hand.

" 'I regret,' said he, 'that the pistol is not loaded with cherry-stones . . . the bullet is heavy. It seems to me that this is not a duel, but a murder. I am not accustomed to taking aim at unarmed men. Let us begin all over again; we will cast lots as to who shall fire first.'

"My head went round . . . I think I raised some objection. . . . At last we loaded another pistol, and rolled up two pieces of paper. He placed these latter in his cap—the same through which I had once sent a bullet—and again I drew the first number.

" 'You are devilish lucky, Count,' said he, with a smile that I shall never forget.

"I don't know what was the matter with me, or how it was that

he managed to make me do it . . . but I fired and hit that picture."

The Count pointed with his finger to the perforated picture; his face glowed like fire; the Countess was whiter than her own handkerchief; and I could not restrain an exclamation.

"I fired," continued the Count, "and, thank Heaven, missed my aim. Then Silvio . . . at that moment he was really terrible. . . . Silvio raised his hand to take aim at me. Suddenly the door opens, Masha rushes into the room, and with a loud shriek throws herself upon my neck. Her presence restored to me all my courage.

" 'My dear,' said I to her, 'don't you see that we are joking? How frightened you are! Go and drink a glass of water and then come back to us; I will introduce you to an old friend and comrade.'

"Masha still doubted.

" 'Tell me, is my husband speaking the truth?' said she, turning to the terrible Silvio: 'is it true that you are only joking?'

" 'He is always joking, Countess,' replied Silvio: 'once he gave me a slap in the face in a joke; on another occasion he sent a bullet through my cap in a joke; and just now, when he fired at me and missed me, it was all in a joke. And now I feel inclined for a joke.'

"With these words he raised his pistol to take aim at me—right before her! Masha threw herself at his feet.

" 'Rise, Masha; are you not ashamed!' I cried in a rage: 'and you, sir, will you cease to make fun of a poor woman? Will you fire or not?'

" 'I will not,' replied Silvio: 'I am satisfied. I have seen your confusion, your alarm. I forced you to fire at me. That is sufficient. You will remember me. I leave you to your conscience.'

"Then he turned to go, but pausing in the doorway, and looking at the picture that my shot had passed through, he fired at it almost without taking aim, and disappeared. My wife had fainted away; the servants did not venture to stop him, the mere look of him filled them with terror. He went out upon the steps, called his coachman, and drove off before I could recover myself."

The Count was silent. In this way I learned the end of the story, whose beginning had once made such a deep impression upon me. The hero of it I never saw again. It is said that Silvio commanded a detachment of Hetairists during the revolt under Alexander Ipsilanti, and that he was killed in the battle of Skoulana.

Tamango

BY PROSPER MÉRIMÉE

(*1803-1870*)

Captain Ledoux was a born sailor. He had started at the bottom and worked his way up to the rank of assistant-quartermaster. At the battle of Trafalgar his left hand was so severely damaged by splinters of wood that he had to have it amputated; and, consequently, he received his discharge, together with first-rate testimonials. The quiet monotony of home life was distasteful to him, and, when he was offered the post of second-lieutenant on board a corsair, he eagerly seized the opportunity of going to sea again. The money which came to him as his share of a few captures enabled him to buy books and to study the theory of navigation in addition to the practical knowledge he already possessed. In due time he became captain of a pirate lugger which could boast of three guns and a crew of sixty dauntless sailors: the longshoremen of Jersey still remember the exploits of this pirate lugger. Then came the peace, which was a great grief to him; he had amassed a considerable amount of money during the war and had looked forward to increasing his fortune at the expense of the English. But he was obliged to offer his services to peaceful merchants; and, as he was known to be a man of courage and experience, he had no difficulty in finding a ship. When slave trading was prohibited by law it could not be undertaken without running great risks, for it was necessary not only to evade the watchfulness of the French Customs officers (which was not so very difficult), but also to escape being captured by English cruisers. Captain Ledoux proved invaluable to these "ebony" merchants.

Unlike the majority of sailors who spend many years in subordinate positions, Captain Ledoux had not that deep-rooted dread of innovation, nor that innate feeling of routine, which even their elevation to higher rank is seldom able to expunge. On the contrary, he was the first to

suggest to his ship-builder the use of metal tanks for holding fresh water. He had the handcuffs, too, and the chains—indispensable articles on board such vessels—made in a particular fashion and carefully varnished to prevent their rusting. But that for which he was well known to all the slave traders was the brig he had had constructed under his personal supervision and according to his own ideas. He had christened her *Hope*. Built for slave trading, she was a fast sailer, narrow and long like a war-ship, and yet able to hold a great number of slaves. He had had the 'tween decks made narrower and less lofty; had reduced the height to forty inches, declaring that that left sufficient room for any nigger of reasonable stature to sit at ease—why should they want to stand up? There would be more than enough standing for them when they reached the colonies, he explained.

The slaves would sit with their backs against the sides of the ship in two parallel lines, leaving a free space between their feet which, in all other slave ships, was only used as a gangway. It was Ledoux's idea to make use of this free space by putting more slaves there, forcing them to sit at right angles to the others. In this way his brig would hold at least ten slaves more than any other ship of the same size. In case of need, more still could have been put on board, but he was considerate enough to insist that each should have a space measuring about five foot by two in which to stretch his limbs during the six weeks' journey. For, after all, niggers were human beings like the white men, he explained to the shipwright, as an excuse for his generous treatment.

The *Hope* weighed anchor in the port of Nantes on a Friday—a fact which superstitious people subsequently recalled. The Customs officers who visited the brig for the purpose of inspecting everything on board did not come across six large cases full of chains, handcuffs, and those irons which were for some unknown reason called "bonds of justice." The very considerable supply of fresh water which had been stowed on board did not seem to astonish them, in spite of the fact that the *Hope* (according to her bills) was only going to Senegambia for the purpose of trading in wood and ivory. The journey was certainly not a long one, but perhaps they thought there was no harm in erring on the safe side —for the water would be invaluable if they happened to be becalmed.

So the good ship *Hope* set sail on a Friday, thoroughly well provisioned and equipped. Ledoux fancied at first that the masts seemed hardly stout enough; but in the course of time he found that the vessel

fulfilled his expectations in every way. They had a first-rate journey, and the coast of Africa was soon sighted. The anchor was lowered at Joal (if I mistake not), that portion of the coast being at the time unguarded by English cruisers; and the native merchants immediately came on board.

The moment could not have been more favourable. Tamango, a well-known warrior and slave dealer, had just reached the coast with a convoy of slaves, which he was selling at cheap rates with the confidence of a man who feels that he has the power of meeting any demands as soon as the article of his trade becomes scarcer.

Captain Ledoux landed at the mouth of the river and called on Tamango. He found him sitting in a straw hut, which had been hastily erected for him, together with his two wives, a few petty traders, and the slave drivers. Tamango had felt bound to put some clothes on to receive the white captain. The old blue uniform which he wore could still be recognized as having been a corporal's, but there were two gold epaulettes on each shoulder, both fastened to the same button and hanging down, one behind, the other in front. As he did not wear a shirt, and the tunic was too small for a man of his stature, a broad zone of black skin was visible between the white facings of the uniform and the canvas breeches. It looked like a belt. A heavy cavalry sword which hung at his side was fastened by a string, and a fine double-barrelled English rifle completed the outfit in which the African warrior doubtless considered himself more than a match for the most exquisite dandy from London or Paris.

Captain Ledoux stared at him for some time in silence, and Tamango, flattered by the belief that he was making a great impression on the white man, drew himself up like a grenadier being inspected by a strange general. Ledoux, after having critically examined him, turned to his chief officer and observed, "There's a piece of brawn which would fetch at least a thousand crowns if we could only land him safe and sound in Martinique."

As soon as they had sat down the customary greetings were exchanged, a sailor who had a smattering of the *Volof* language acting as interpreter. A basket full of bottles of brandy was brought, drinking began at once, and the captain thought to propitiate Tamango by making him a present of a fine copper powder-flask with a portrait of Napoleon embossed on it. The gift was acknowledged with the con-

ventional show of gratitude. Tamango then suggested that they should go and sit outside in the shade (not forgetting the brandy bottle) and inspect the slaves he had to sell.

They came forward in a long file, worn out by fear and fatigue, all bearing on their shoulders a huge fork over two yards long, the two prongs of which were fastened at the back of the neck with a wooden bar. Whenever they set out on a march one of the slave drivers bore on his shoulder the handle of the yoke of the first slave, who carried that of the man behind him; the second slave carried the yoke-handle of the third slave, and so on with the others. When a halt was made, the leader of the file drove the pointed end of his yoke-handle into the ground and the whole column came to a standstill. Of course, there could be no question of escape from the file with a heavy yoke two yards long fastened round one's neck.

The captain shrugged his shoulders as each slave, male or female, passed before him; he called them puny creatures, said that the females were too old or too young, and complained of the degeneracy of the black race.

"The whole race is deteriorating," he declared. "It used to be quite different in the olden days when every woman was five foot six, and four men could easily have worked a frigate's capstan and raised the sheet anchor."

However, he critically picked out a first assortment, choosing the strong and the good-looking, for which he was willing to pay the usual price; on the remainder he demanded a considerable reduction. But Tamango knew his own mind; he insisted that his wares were valuable, and spoke of the scarcity of men and the dangers of the traffic. He ended by quoting the very lowest price he could possibly accept for the slaves the white captain still had room for on board.

Ledoux stared at him in amazement and indignation when he heard Tamango's proposal interpreted. The captain got up, swearing like a trooper, apparently with the intention of putting an end there and then to all bargaining with a man so unreasonable. But Tamango, after some difficulty, persuaded him to sit down. Another bottle was opened and the discussion renewed. Now it was the black man's turn to call the white captain's views outrageous and extravagant. They talked and haggled as bottle after bottle was emptied; but the liquor was having quite a different effect on the two contracting parties. The

more the Frenchman drank the less became his offers, and the more the negro drank the less he insisted on his demands. So, when the case of brandy was finished, it was found that they had come to terms. In exchange for the hundred and sixty slaves, Tamango accepted a quantity of worthless cotton, powder, gun-flints, three casks of brandy, and fifty rusty rifles. The captain, to ratify the compact, shook the half-tipsy negro by the hand, and immediately the slaves were handed over to the French sailors, who lost no time in putting on iron chains and handcuffs in place of the wooden yokes—a striking demonstration of the superiority of European civilization.

There were still about thirty slaves—children, old men, or infirm women. But there was no more room on board. Tamango, not knowing what to do with this refuse, offered to sell them to the captain at the rate of a bottle of brandy a head. The offer was a tempting one. Ledoux remembered a performance of the *Sicilian Vespers,* at Nantes, at which he had noticed that a considerable number of sturdy and well-furnished people had managed to push their way into the pit which was already full, and ultimately find seats, thanks to the compressibility of human bodies. He agreed to take the twenty slimmest of the thirty slaves. Tamango then offered to dispose of the ten remaining for a glass of brandy a head. The fact that children go half-price and take up half-room in railway carriages crossed the captain's mind. So he accepted three children, but said he would not take one more. Tamango, seeing himself left still with seven slaves on his hands, seized his rifle and took aim at the nearest woman. She was the mother of the three children.

"Buy her," he said to the white man, "or I'll fire. Half a glass of brandy, or she dies."

"But what the deuce am I to do with her?" asked Ledoux.

Tamango fired, and the slave fell down dead.

"Now for another!" cried Tamango, taking aim at a decrepit old man. "A glass of brandy, or—"

The bullet went off at random, for one of his wives had suddenly seized his arm. She had happened to recognize in the old man whom her husband was about to kill a *guiriot,* or magician, who had prophesied that she would be queen.

Tamango, excited by all the brandy he had consumed, lost control of himself when he found himself thus thwarted. He struck his wife

roughly with the butt end of his gun, and turned towards the captain.

"Take her," he said; "I'll make you a present of this woman."

"I shall be able to find room for you," said Ledoux, as he took her by the hand, and he smiled when he saw how beautiful she was.

The interpreter—a charitable man—asked Tamango for the remaining six slaves in exchange for a cardboard snuff-box. He took off their yokes and told them to go whither they would. They hurried away in different directions, at a loss to know how to reach their homes, two hundred leagues from the coast.

In the meantime the captain had said good-bye to Tamango and was hard at work getting his cargo on board. He did not think it safe to remain longer in the river, for fear of the cruisers which might return at any moment. So he made up his mind to set sail on the morrow. Tamango could not do anything but lie down on the grass in the shade, and sleep away the effects of the brandy.

When he woke up the vessel was already under sail, and moving down the river. Tamango, still very dizzy from the effects of his recent debauch, called for his wife Ayché. He was reminded that she had been unfortunate enough to displease him, and that he had made a present of her to the white captain who had taken her away on board with him. Half stupefied at this news, Tamango clasped his head in his hands; then, seizing his gun, he rushed away by the most direct route towards a little creek about half a mile from the sea. He knew the river made several detours before it reached the sea, and, by means of a small boat which ought to be there, he hoped to overtake the brig, delayed in her voyage, as she would be, by the winding river. He was not deceived; he leaped into the boat and just managed to reach the slave ship in time.

Ledoux was surprised to see him; still more so to learn that he wanted his wife back.

"You gave her to me," he said, "and I have no intention of giving you back your present," and he turned and left him.

But the negro insisted, said he would give back some of the goods he had received in exchange for the slaves. The captain laughed, and told him that Ayché was a fine woman and that he intended to keep her. Poor Tamango burst into a torrent of tears, and groaned and cried like a man being tortured by a surgeon. He flung himself about the deck calling for his darling Ayché, and dashed his head against

the planks as though he were trying to commit suicide. The captain, quite unmoved, pointed to the shore, and suggested that it was time for him to go. But Tamango held to his point. He went to the length of offering his golden epaulettes, his sword, his rifle. All in vain.

Meantime the lieutenant of the *Hope* suggested to the captain, "Why not take this dusky brute in place of the three slaves who died during the night; he is worth more than they."

Ledoux looked at him. Yes. He was worth at least a thousand crowns. Besides, this journey, which promised to be exceptionally remunerative, would probably be his last; his fortune would be made, and he would give up the slave trade. If so, what did it matter what sort of a reputation he left behind on the coast of Guinea? There was not a soul in sight on the shore, and the black chieftain was entirely at his mercy. It would only be a matter of disarming him, for it would hardly be safe to lay hands on him while he still had arms in his possession. So Ledoux asked him for his gun, as if he wished to examine it to see whether it was really worth exchanging for the beautiful negress. Whilst he was scrutinizing it, he took care to jerk the charge out. The lieutenant succeeded in obtaining his sword, and Tamango stood disarmed. Two sturdy sailors sprang on him, brought him to the ground, and tried to bind him. But the black man struggled heroically as soon as he recovered from the surprise, and he fought for long with the two sailors in spite of the disadvantage at which they had him. By sheer strength he sprang to his feet, and with one blow he felled the man who held him by the neck. Leaving half his coat in the hands of the other sailor, he dashed furiously towards the lieutenant to regain his sword, and received a cut on the head which, without going deep, made a large wound. He fell a second time, and the sailors soon bound him hand and foot. He yelled with rage and struggled and writhed like a wild boar caught in a net; after a while, seeing that all resistance was useless, he shut his eyes and remained absolutely motionless. Had it not been for his heavy and hurried breathing, one might have thought him dead.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the captain, "won't these slaves he sold to us chuckle heartily when they see him a slave like them! They will begin to think there must be such a thing as Providence."

Meanwhile poor Tamango was bleeding fast. The charitable interpreter, who, the day before, had saved the lives of the six slaves, came

to bind up his wound and speak a few words of sympathy with him. No record exists of what he said, and Tamango remained as motionless as a corpse. Two sailors carried him like a package down to his allotted place in the 'tween decks. For two days he refused to eat or drink anything, and he scarcely opened his eyes. His companions in captivity, once his prisoners, had watched him brought into their midst with terror-stricken amazement. So great was the awe with which his mere presence still inspired them that not one of them durst jeer at the misery of the man who was the cause of all their suffering.

Sailing rapidly on the wings of a strong land breeze, the vessel was soon out of sight of the coast of Africa. The captain's mind, no longer haunted with visions of English cruisers, began to dwell on the prospective fortune he hoped to reap in the colonies towards which he was sailing. His cargo of "ebony" was in good health. There were no contagious diseases. Only twelve negroes had died of suffocation, and they were the weakest—a mere trifle. But in order to preserve this human cargo as much as possible from the effects of the passage he had them brought up on deck once a day. Three successive batches of these unhappy slaves came up to inhale, for one hour each batch, the stock of fresh air which was to last through the twenty-four hours. A portion of the crew mounted guard, armed to the teeth for fear of insurrection; but they took care that the slaves were never entirely freed from their shackles. Sometimes a sailor who could play the violin would treat them to some music, and it was curious to watch all those black faces gazing up at the fiddler, gradually losing their look of abject despair, and then breaking forth into loud laughter—clapping their hands too, as much as their chains would allow them. Exercise being essential to health, one of Captain Ledoux's salutary regulations was that all the slaves should be made to dance, just as horses are made to prance when embarked on a long journey.

"Come along, my boys, dance and amuse yourselves!" the captain would shout in a voice of thunder, cracking his heavy slave-whip. In less than no time the poor negroes were leaping and dancing.

For some time Tamango's wound kept him below the hatches. But at length he appeared on deck; at first he stood in the midst of the crowd of cringing slaves, holding his proud head very high, and his sad but untroubled eyes gazed over the wide expanse of ocean which surrounded the ship; then he lay down, or rather threw himself down on

deck, without even troubling to shift his chains into a less awkward position. Ledoux was sitting behind him on the quarter-deck, smoking his pipe at ease. Near him stood Ayché, holding in her hand a tray of liquors which she was ready to pour out for him. Instead of shackles she wore a pretty blue cotton dress and dainty morocco shoes, which clearly showed that she occupied a position of honour in the captain's domestic circle. One of the black men who loathed Tamango pointed her out to him. As soon as he caught sight of her he cried out, and springing up impetuously, reached the quarter-deck before the sailors on guard could prevent such a flagrant breach of discipline.

"Ayché!" he shouted at the top of his voice—and Ayché shrieked as he added, "Do you imagine that there is no MAMA JUMBO in the land of the white man?"

The sailors rushed to his side with uplifted clubs, but he calmly folded his arms and walked slowly back to his place, whilst Ayché burst into a flood of tears, and seemed appalled at his mysterious question.

The interpreter explained what the awful Mama Jumbo was, the very mention of which had roused such terror.

"It is the bogey of the black men," he said. "When a husband is afraid his wife is going to behave as some wives do, he threatens her with Mama Jumbo. I have seen Mama Jumbo with my own eyes, and I understand the trick; but the poor niggers . . . they are so unsophisticated they do not understand anything. Picture to yourself a group of women dancing in an evening—having a *folgar*, as they call it in their dialect—near a thick and sombre grove. Suddenly weird music is heard. Not a soul is to be seen, for all the musicians are hidden among the trees. The sounds of the reed flutes, wooden drums, *bulafos*, and guitars made of the half of a gourd make a melody calculated to produce the devil himself. No sooner do the women hear the music than they begin to tremble and would run away if their husbands would let them; they know too well what is going to happen. Suddenly a huge white figure as tall as our topgallant-mast comes stalking out of the wood, with a head as big as a pumpkin, eyes like hawseholes, and a mouth like the devil's, full of fire. It moves slowly, very slowly, and does not come more than half a cable's length away from the grove. The women shriek and yell. It is 'Mama Jumbo.' And then their husbands tell them to confess their sins, for if they do not

speak the Mama Jumbo is there to gobble them up alive. Some of the women are foolish enough to acknowledge everything, and their husbands proceed to give them a sound thrashing."

"But what is the white figure, this Mama Jumbo?" asked the captain.

"Why, it's only some Merry Andrew, muffled up in a white sheet, holding up on the end of a stick a hollow gourd, with a lighted candle inside, that serves as a head. It is nothing worse than that, for it does not require much ingenuity to deceive these poor blacks. But, when all's said and done, it's not such a bad invention, this Mama Jumbo of theirs; I wish my wife believed in it."

"If my wife knows nothing of Mistress Jumbo," said Ledoux, "she has met with Master Stick, and she knows well enough what the result would be if she played any pranks with me. We are not a long-suffering family, we Ledoux, and though I have only one fist left it can still use a rope's end to some purpose. As to that joker who started the subject of Mama Jumbo, tell him to keep still, and that if he frightens this little woman again I'll have him flogged till his skin changes from black to the colour of an underdone beefsteak."

The captain led Ayché down to his room and tried to comfort her, but neither his caresses nor his blows (there was a limit even to the captain's patience) succeeded in pacifying the beautiful negress; her tears flowed in torrents. Ledoux went up on deck in a bad humour and vented his feelings on the officer on duty concerning the first thing that came uppermost.

During the night, when nearly everyone on board was sound asleep and the men on watch were listening to a low, sad, monotonous chant, which seemed to come from the 'tween decks, they heard the shrill, piercing shriek of a woman. Then they heard Ledoux's fierce voice swearing and threatening, and the sound of his heavy whip echoed through the whole vessel. Then the noise ceased, and all was silent. On the morrow Tamango came on deck, his face disfigured, but still as proud and undaunted as ever.

As soon as Ayché caught sight of him she rushed from the quarter-deck, where she had been sitting by the side of the captain, and fell on her knees before Tamango, exclaiming in a frenzy of despair:

"Forgive me, Tamango, forgive me!"

Tamango looked steadily into her eyes for a minute, and then, seeing that the interpreter was not within earshot, he ejaculated "A file!"

and, turning his back upon her, lay down on the deck. The captain chid her savagely, even struck her once or twice, and enjoined her never again to speak to her ex-husband. But he had not the least inkling of the meaning of the few words they had exchanged, and he did not ask any questions about them.

Tamango, meanwhile, locked up with the other slaves, continually exhorted them to make one great effort to regain their liberty. He spoke to them of the small number of the white men, and called their attention to the increasing carelessness of their guards; and, without going into details, he promised them that he would find some way of leading them back to their country. He boasted of his knowledge of the occult sciences, for which the black races have great veneration, and declared that any who refused to assist in the attempt would incur the wrath of the devil. All these harangues were delivered in the dialect of the Peules, which was known to most of the slaves, but which the interpreter did not understand. Such was the credit of the dreaded orator, and so inveterate was their habit of obeying him, that his eloquence worked wonders, and he was begged to fix a day for their emancipation long before he had even had time to work out all his plans. So he told the conspirators vaguely that the time was not yet come, and that the devil, who appeared to him at night, had not yet given the word; but he bade them hold themselves in readiness for the first signal. In the meantime he did not lose any opportunity of testing the vigilance of the crew. One day he saw a sailor leaning over the side of the vessel watching a shoal of flying-fish which were following the ship. Tamango took the rifle which had been left standing against the gunwale, and began to handle it, mimicking grotesquely the exercises he had seen the sailors do. The rifle was immediately taken from him, but he had learnt that it was possible to touch a weapon without at once arousing suspicion. When the time came for him to use one in earnest, woe betide the man who tried then to wrest it from him!

One morning Ayché threw him a biscuit, making at the same time a sign which he alone understood. The biscuit contained a small file, and on that tool hung the success of the plot. Tamango took good care not to let his companions see the file; but, when night had fallen, he began to utter unintelligible sounds, accompanied by weird gestures. Gradually he became more and more excited, and the mutterings in-

creased to loud groans. As they listened to the varied intonations of his voice, the slaves felt convinced that he was engaged in an animated conversation with an unseen person. They were all terrified, not doubting that the devil was at that moment in their midst. Tamango put the finishing touch to the scene by exclaiming joyfully:

"Comrades! the spirit which I have conjured has at length fulfilled his promises, and I hold in my hand the talisman which is to save us. Now you only need to summon up a little courage, and you are free men."

Those near him were allowed to feel the file, and not one of them was sharp enough to suspect that the whole thing was a gross imposture.

At length, after many days of expectation, the great day of liberty and vengeance dawned. The conspirators had been sworn to secrecy by a solemn oath, and the arrangements had been settled after much deliberation. The strongest amongst those who happened to go on deck at the same time as Tamango were to seize the arms of their guards, some of the others were to go to the captain's room to fetch the arms which were kept there. Those who had succeeded in filing their handcuffs were to lead the way; but in spite of several nights' persistent toil, the majority of the slaves were still unable to take any active part in the attack. So three lusty negroes were singled out to slay the man who kept in his pocket the keys of the manacles, and to return at once and unfetter their companions.

That day Captain Ledoux seemed in the best of tempers. Contrary to his usual habits, he pardoned a cabin boy who had incurred a flogging. He congratulated the officer of the watch on his seamanship, told the crew he was pleased with their work and promised to give them all a gratuity at Martinique, which they would reach very soon. All the sailors at once began to amuse themselves by making plans as to how they would use the gratuity. Their thoughts were of brandy and of the swart women of Martinique, when Tamango and his fellow-conspirators were brought up on deck.

They had been careful to file their handcuffs in such a way that nothing was noticeable, but at the same time so that they could break them open easily. Furthermore, they rattled their chains so much that morning, that they seemed to be twice as heavily laden as usual. When they had had time to drink in the air, they all joined hands and began to dance, whilst Tamango intoned his tribal war song which he

always used before going to battle. After they had danced for some time, Tamango, as if tired out, stretched himself at full length near a sailor who was leaning back at his ease against the ship's bulwarks; all the others followed his example, so that every one of the guards was singled out by the several negroes.

As soon as he had managed to remove his handcuffs quietly, Tamango gave a tremendous shout, which was the signal, seized the sailor near him violently by the legs, threw him head over heels, and, planting his foot on his stomach, wrenched the gun away from him and shot the officer of the watch. Simultaneously every other sailor on deck was seized, disarmed, and forthwith strangled. From all sides came sounds of the struggle. The boatswain's mate, who had the keys of the handcuffs, was one of the first victims. In a moment the deck was swarming with a crowd of negroes. Those who could not find arms seized the bars of the capstan or the oars of the gig. The fate of the white men was already sealed; a few sailors made a show of resistance on the quarter-deck, but they lacked weapons and resolution. Ledoux, however, was still alive, and had not lost any of his courage.

Seeing that Tamango was the soul of the revolt, he hoped that if he could kill him short work might be made of his accomplices. So he sprang forward, sword in hand, calling to him at the top of his voice. Tamango lost no time in rushing to the encounter. The two commanders met in one of the gangways—one of those narrow passages leading aft from the quarter-deck. Tamango, holding his gun by the barrel, and using it as a club, was the first to strike. The white man dexterously avoided the blow: the butt end of the musket, falling violently on the planks, was smashed, and the weapon was dashed out of Tamango's hand. He stood defenceless, and Ledoux advanced with a diabolical grin. But before he had time to make use of his sword, Tamango, as agile as the panthers of his native country, sprang into his adversary's arms and seized the hand which held the sword. The one strained to hold the sword, the other to wrench it from him. During this desperate struggle both stumbled, but the black man fell undermost. Without a moment's hesitation Tamango hugged his adversary with all his strength, and bit his back with such vehemence that the blood spurted out as it does under the teeth of a lion. The sword slipped from the weakened hand of the captain. Tamango seized it, sprang up, and, his mouth streaming with blood, yelled

his triumph as he stabbed his dying enemy through and through.

The victory was complete. The few remaining sailors entreated the negroes to have pity on them, but all, even the interpreter who had never done them any harm, were mercilessly massacred. The lieutenant fell fighting heroically. He had withdrawn aft, behind one of those small cannons which turn on a pivot, and are loaded with grape-shot. With his left hand he worked the gun and with his right he used the sword so dexterously that he attracted a crowd of negroes round him. Then he fired the gun into the midst and paved a way with dead and dying. The next moment he was torn to pieces.

When the body of the last white man had been hacked to pieces and thrown overboard the negroes began to feel that their thirst for vengeance was satiated, and they gazed up at the ship's sails which were swollen by the fresh breeze, and seemed still to obey their oppressors and to carry the conquerors in spite of their triumph to the land of slavery.

"All our labour is lost!" they murmured in their despair. "Will the great fetish of the white man lead us back to our homes now that we have shed the blood of so many of his worshippers?"

Someone suggested that Tamango might be able to make the fetish obey. So they all began to shout for Tamango.

He was in no hurry to hear them. They found him standing in the forecabin, one hand resting on the captain's bloody sword, the other stretched out to his wife Ayché, who was on her knees kissing it. But the joy of victory could not obliterate a strange look of anxiety which was visible in every line of his face. Less fatuous than the rest, he was better able to understand the difficulties of the situation.

At last he came upon the deck, affecting a serenity he did not feel. Urged by a hundred confused voices to change the course of the vessel, he stalked slowly towards the helm as if to postpone for a while the moment which would determine both for himself and for the others the extent of his power.

Not even the dullest negro on board had failed to notice the influence exercised on the movements of the ship by a certain wheel and the box fixed in front of it; but the whole mechanism was a profound mystery to them. Tamango examined the compass for some time, moving his lips as if he were reading the characters which were printed on it; then he put his hand to his head and assumed the pensive look

of a man doing mental arithmetic. All the negroes stood round him, their mouths wide open, their eyes one stare, anxiously taking note of his slightest movement. At length, with that mixture of fear and confidence which ignorance inspires, he gave the guiding wheel a tremendous turn.

Like a noble steed which rears when some imprudent rider drives in his spurs, the good ship *Hope* plunged into the waves at this unwonted handling, as if she felt insulted and wished to sink together with her stupid pilot. The sails being now entirely at cross purposes with the helm, the ship heeled over so suddenly that it looked as if she were bound to founder. Her long yards soused into the sea; many of the negroes stumbled and some fell overboard. However, the ship righted herself and stood proudly against the swell, as if to make one last effort to avoid destruction. But there came a sudden gust of wind, and, with a deafening crash, the two masts fell, snapped a few feet above the deck, which was strewn with wreckage and covered with a tangled network of ropes. The terrified negroes fled below the hatchway howling with fear, but as there was nothing left to catch the breeze, the vessel remained steady and merely rocked to and fro on the billows.

Presently the more daring among them came up again and began clearing away the wreckage which encumbered the deck. Tamango remained motionless, leaning on the binnacle, his face buried in his folded arms. Ayché, who was beside him, did not dare to speak. One by one the negroes approached him; they began to murmur, and soon a torrent of insults and abuse was let loose upon him.

"Traitor! impostor!" they cried, "you are the cause of all our ills: you sold us to the white men, you persuaded us to rebel, you boasted your wisdom, you promised to take us back to our homes. We trusted you, fools that we were! and now we have narrowly escaped destruction because you have offended the white man's fetish."

Tamango raised his head proudly, and the negroes who stood round him slunk back. He picked up two guns, beckoned to his wife to follow him, and strode through the group of men, who made way for him. He went to the bow of the vessel, where he constructed a kind of barricade of planks and barrels; behind this entrenchment he fixed the two muskets in such a way that the bayonets were menacingly prominent. There he sat down and they left him alone.

Some of the negroes were in tears; others raised their hands to the sky, and called on their own and the white man's fetishes; others knelt down by the compass and wondered at its ceaseless movements, entreating it to take them to their homes again; the remainder lay on the deck in a state of abject despair. Among these wretches were women and children shrieking from sheer terror, and a score of wounded men imploring the relief which no one dreamt of bringing them.

All of a sudden a negro appeared on deck, his face beaming with joy. He came to tell them that he had discovered where the white men stored their brandy; and his excitement and general demeanour clearly showed that he had already helped himself to some. This piece of news silenced for a while the cries of the distracted slaves. They rushed down to the steward's room and gorged the liquor. In about an hour's time they were all dancing and roaring on deck, giving vent to the excesses of brutish drunkenness. The noise of their singing and dancing mingled with the groans and sobs of the wounded. Night fell, and still the orgy continued.

Next morning, when they woke, despair again possessed them. During the night a great number of the wounded had died. The vessel was surrounded by floating corpses, and clouds were lowering over the heavy sea. They held a conference. Several experts in the art of magic, who had not dared speak of their knowledge before for fear of Tamango, now offered their services, and several potent incantations were tried. The failure of each attempt increased their despondency till at length they appealed to Tamango, who was still behind his barricade. After all, he was the wisest of them, and he alone could extricate them from the desperate condition into which he had brought them. An old man approached him with overtures of peace, and begged him to give them his advice. But Tamango, as inexorable as Coriolanus, turned a deaf ear to his entreaties. During the night, in the midst of the tumult, he had fetched a supply of biscuits and salt meat. To all appearance he had no intention of leaving the solitude of his retreat.

There was still plenty of brandy left. That, at all events, helped them to forget the sea, slavery and the approach of death. They went to sleep, and in their dreams saw Africa with its forests of gum trees, its thatched huts, and its baobabs, whose foliage shaded whole villages. The orgy of the day before was renewed, and continued for some time.

They did nothing but howl and weep and tear their hair, or drink and sleep. Several died of drinking, others jumped into the sea or stabbed themselves.

One morning Tamango left his fort and advanced to the stump of the mainmast.

"Slaves!" he shouted, "the Spirit has appeared to me in a dream and revealed to me the means of helping you to return to your homes. You deserve to be abandoned to your fates, but I pity the women and children who are crying. I pardon you. Listen!"

All the negroes bowed their heads submissively, and gathered round him.

"Only the white men," continued Tamango, "know the mystic formulas which guide these massive wooden houses; but we can steer without difficulty those small boats, which are like our own" (he pointed to the sloop and the other ship's boats). "Let us fill them with provisions, set out in them, and row in the direction of the wind. My Master and yours will make it blow in the direction of our homes."

They took his word for it. No plan could have been more reckless. Without any knowledge of the compass, ignorant as to their whereabouts, they could not do anything but row at random. His belief was that by rowing straight ahead they were certain to come, sooner or later, to a land inhabited by black men; for he had heard his mother say that white men lived in their ships, and that black men possessed the earth.

Soon afterwards everything was ready to be embarked, but only the sloop and one small boat were found to be serviceable. It was impossible to find room for the eighty negroes who were still alive, so the sick and wounded had to be abandoned. The majority of them begged to be slain rather than be left.

After endless difficulties the two boats were got under way, so heavily laden that they might at any moment be swamped in such a choppy sea. Tamango and Ayché were in the sloop, which was soon left behind by the other boat—a mere cock-boat, and far less overcharged. The wailing of the poor wretches who had been left behind on board the brig was still audible when a big wave suddenly caught the sloop athwart and swamped her. In less than a minute she had disappeared. The smaller boat saw the catastrophe, and immediately the oars were plied with redoubled energy, for fear of having to pick up those who

were shipwrecked. Nearly all who were in the sloop were drowned. Only a dozen or so managed to reach the vessel again; among whom were Tamango and Ayché. When the sun set they could see the other boat far away on the horizon; no one knows what became of it.

Why should I weary the reader with a revolting description of the tortures of famine? About a score of human beings, crowded together, now tossed about on a stormy sea, now scorched by the fierce heat of the sun, fought daily for what scanty remains of food there were—every scrap of biscuit entailing a fight. . . . The weaker died, not because the stronger killed him, but because he chose to let him expire. After a few days only two were still alive on board the good brig *Hope*—Ayché and Tamango.

One night the sea was rough, the wind blew high, and the darkness was so intense that one end of the ship could not be seen from the other. Ayché lay on a mattress in the captain's room and Tamango sat at her feet. They had not spoken a word for many hours.

"Tamango," murmured Ayché at length, "it is I who have brought all this suffering upon you."

"I do not suffer," he answered quickly, and threw the half biscuit, which he still had left, on the mattress beside her.

"Keep it yourself," she said gently, returning the biscuit. "I am no longer hungry. Besides, why eat? Is not mine hour come?"

Tamango got up without answering and staggered to the deck, where he sat down against the stump of the mast. His head lolled on his breast, and he began to whistle his tribal war song. Suddenly a loud cry reached his ear in spite of the noise of the tempest; a light flashed; other shouts followed, and a huge black ship glided swiftly past the brig—so close that Tamango could see her yards pass over his head. He only saw two faces in the light of a lantern which hung from a mast. They shouted again; then their vessel, swept along by the storm, disappeared into the darkness. Doubtless the men on watch had caught sight of the disabled hulk, but the violence of the tempest had prevented their tacking. The next moment Tamango saw the flash of a cannon and heard the report; then another flash, but no report; then he saw nothing more. On the morrow not a sail was visible on the horizon. Tamango threw himself down on his mattress and closed his eyes. His wife Ayché had died that night.

I do not know how long it was before an English frigate, the *Bellona,* sighted a dismasted vessel, to all appearances abandoned by her crew. They sent a sloop alongside and found a negress dead and a negro by her side, so haggard and so thin that he looked like a skeleton. He was unconscious, but there was still a breath left in him. The doctor took charge of him and did all he could for him, so that when they reached Kingston, Tamango had regained his health. He was asked to give an account of his adventures, and he told them all he could remember. The Jamaica planters suggested that he should be hanged as a rebel, but the governor was a kind-hearted man and took an interest in the negro, whose crime was, after all, justifiable, since he had but acted in self-defence; and, besides, the men he had murdered were only Frenchmen. He was treated in the same way as the slaves who are found on board a captured slave trader. They set him at liberty —that is to say they made him work for the Government. And he earned threepence a day besides his keep. One day the colonel of the 75th caught sight of this splendid specimen of a man, and made him a drummer in his regimental band. Tamango learnt a little English, but hardly ever spoke. To make up for that he was always drinking rum or tafia. He died in the hospital of congestion of the lungs.

Winter[1]

BY VLADIMIR G. KOROLENKO

(*1853-1921*)

TRANSLATED BY ZÉNAÏDE A. RAGOZIN

I

WE were travelling southward, along the bank of the river Lena, but winter was overtaking us from the north; yet it seemed to be confronting us, too, coming down the course of the river.

September had been pretty mild around Yakutsk; not a particle of ice was to be seen on the river. At one of the stations nearest the city, we were even tempted by the beauty of the moonlit night into refusing to spend it in the station-keeper's close hut, which had just been coated on the outside for the winter with fresh dung, still warm. So we made our beds on the river bank, inside boats, and covered ourselves with deerskins. In the course of the night, however, I had a feeling as if somebody were burning my right cheek with a hot iron. I awoke and saw that the moonlit night had grown still whiter. Everything around me was covered with hoar-frost, so was my own pillow, and it was the touch of it that gave me the illusion of being burned. My companion, who slept in the same boat with me, probably had dreamed the same thing. The moon shone right in his face, and I could see the frightful grimaces which convulsed it from time to time. His sleep was profound and, probably, most painful. At the same time, my other fellow-traveller raised himself, in the next boat, partly removing the fur coats and robes that were heaped upon him. They were all white and fluffy with rime, and he looked like a white phantom born of the cold sheen of the frost and the moonlight.

"Brr-r," he shivered. "Eh, but it's cold, friends! . . ."

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The boat swayed under him, and the movement caused a clanking in the water, like that of broken glass. This was the first rim-ice "setting" in places protected from the swift current, very thin as yet, showing traces of the long crystal-like brittle needles, which broke with a sound like fine glass. The river seemed to slacken in its course under the first heavy blow of Old Winter's club, while the rocks of its hilly banks, on the contrary, looked lighter, more airy, seeming to recede into vague, lucent distance, sparkling, almost phantomlike in their dress of white frost.

Such was the first greeting of winter at the start of a long journey: cheerful, challenging, almost playful.

As, slowly and with many delays, we moved farther southward, the winter gained strength. Vast shoals and shallows already stood thinly crusted with dark, pure, virgin ice, and a stone, thrown from the bank, would be long rolling and sliding over the smooth surface, causing a strange, chimelike tinkling, gradually swelling in volume and taken up by the mountain echoes. Farther on, the ice, now having firm hold of the river edges and of the quickly hardening shore strips, already withstood the impetus of the current. Winter extended his conquests. The frozen shore strips were widening, and every step in the strife was marked by a line of broken ice cakes showing where the current, but lately swift and strong, had again retreated a couple of yards towards the middle.

A little later snow appeared here and there on the banks, contrasting vividly with the dark, dull water. Later still the small mountain streams joined the fight. Gradually descending from their river-heads, they continually kept breaking up the ice at their mouths and throwing it into the Lena, encumbering the current left free, and hindering the river's own struggle with the enemy. The broken line rose higher and higher, the ice cakes, thrown out by the current on the edges of the shore strips, grew thicker and thicker. They already formed actual ramparts, and, looking from the bank, we sometimes could perceive the beginning of an alarming commotion among these ramparts. That was when the river angrily flung, against the immovable masses that fettered it, such ice cakes as still floated freely on its open channel, beating breaches in them, smashing the ice into bits, splitting it into long, sharp needles, crushing it into snow, only impotently to retreat in the end, and after a while it turned out that the white broken line had

advanced some more, the frozen belt had grown wider and the river bed narrower.

As time went on, the fight grew more stubborn, the grandeur of it more striking. The river now no longer tumbled insignificant ice cakes, but hurled huge blocks, piling them up in monstrous disorder. The scene grew ever more disconsolate. Nearer to the banks the piles already froze solidly into shapeless masses, while in the middle they still heavily tossed and wheeled in chaotic confusion, screening from view the gradually closing channel, as a brutal crowd might screen from the public gaze the place of execution. All nature seemed spell-bound in fear and mournful, solemn expectation. The desert passes of the mountainous shores docilely reverberated the dry crash of the breaking ice-floes and the heavy groaning of the succumbing river.

Still a little while, and the dark stream in the middle of the river had grown slushy white, and on its surface, slowly shuffling and revolving, colliding, grazing, and shoving one another, and softly rustling, thickly floated the white cakes, ready to be welded into the icy pall which was finally to press the life out of the tamed and conquered current.

II

One day, watching from a small promontory, we espied, amidst these slowly moving masses, a black object, which stood out plainly against the yellowish-white background. In the wilderness everything attracts attention, and our little caravan at once broke out into animated talk and guesses.

"A crow," said one.

"A bear," suggested another.

Opinions divided. To some the black speck appeared not bigger than a crow, to others not smaller than a bear. The remote monotony of those moving masses, lazily floating along between high mountains, distorted the entire perspective.

"Whence should a bear have found his way to the middle of the river?" I demanded of the man who had emitted the bear hypothesis.

"From the opposite bank. Year before last a she-bear crossed from yonder island with three cubs."

"Animals even now are crossing all the time to our side; that promises a fierce winter," added another.

"The cold drives them," put in a third speaker.

Our entire caravan held up around the promontory, to watch the approach of the object which had aroused the general interest. The white ice-slush, meanwhile, was slowly drawing nearer and we could see that the black spot upon it was shifting its position, seeming really to advance towards our side of the river, stepping from one ice cake on to another.

"Why, brothers, that's a mountain goat!" at length exclaimed one of the men.

"Two of them," corrected another, looking more closely.

Sure enough, mountain goats they were, and there were, indeed, two of them. Now we could clearly make out the two dark, graceful little figures in the midst of that icy hell. One was somewhat bigger than the other. Probably mother and daughter. The ice cakes all around them tossed, clashed, whirled, and crumbled, and, at every collision, there was a seething and foaming, and throwing up of spray in the interstices between the cakes, and the dainty creatures, all alert, stood on a comparatively large cake, their slender feet bunched together, poised for a spring.

"Well, what's going to happen, I wonder!" spoke a young lad, deeply interested.

A huge ice cake, which was floating ahead of that on which the goats stood, slackened its speed somewhat, then began to revolve, hindering the movements of those behind it. This caused around the animals a chaos of splashing and destruction. The cakes stood up vertically, climbing on top of one another, splitting and breaking with a loud crash like the rattle of firearms. At times, dark chasms opened and closed between them. The two wretched little specks of life entirely disappeared for a moment in the chaos, but the next moment we caught sight of them on another ice cake, again bunching their poor little feet, ready for another spring. This was repeated several times, and each new spring brought them, with well-calculated directness, nearer our side and away from the opposite side.

Already it was possible to perceive the plan followed by the intelligent animals.

Not far from us the promontory protruded in a sharp point into the river, and there the ice cakes, driven asunder by the current, broke with extraordinary violence. But the remoter ones, which avoided

the line of shock, were at once seized by the receding counter-current and carried back to the other side. The elder of the goats, who evidently managed the operation, directed their course so that every leap brought them nearer to this promontory, groaning as it was under the thundering onslaught of the ice run. Whether or no she saw us, she took no notice of our presence. We were standing immovably on that same promontory, and even the large ferocious station dog, which had volunteered to follow us, and was watching with pointed ears, plainly took a wholly impersonal interest in the issue of these daring and tragically-dangerous manœuvres.

When the goats were quite near the land, within some dozen yards of our little crowd, they still thought of nothing but the collisions of the ice cakes and their own desperate leaps. As the cake on which they stood, slowly revolving, approached the critical point, we held our breaths. One instant. . . . A dry crash, a chaotic wreckage of fragments hurled up into the air, then falling down and creeping along the ice-coated edges of the promontory; then—two black bodies, flying with the lightness of well-aimed missiles over the chaos and landing on the bank. They landed safely. But just beyond the other edge of the narrow strip was a dark streak of water, and our crowd barred their progress. But the clever animal did not hesitate a second. I noticed the strangely confident look in her round eyes; then she made straight for us, showing the way to her young companion. The station dog, a big, shaggy Polkan, stepped aside in a dazed sort of way, when the elder goat, shielding the younger with her body, bounded past him, almost grazing his rough coat with her flank. The dog ran to one side with his tail down and a puzzled look, as though wondering at his own forbearance and fearful lest it might be misinterpreted. But we applauded his self-restraint and gladly looked at the ridge above us, where two slender bodies seemed to be flying, stretching full length, over the crags, from summit to summit.

III

We had travelled the last stage with a casual companion, Ivan Radionovitch Sokolsky, the head of a prospecting party. I know not what life-tempest had cast him into that remote part of Siberia, and he had ceased from struggling to get away, having grown to like a prospector's

existence, so rich in varied experiences. He was a large man, with a weather-beaten face, a mane of partly blanched hair, and features which seemed frozen hard, so difficult was it for them to express any emotion; his feelings were as safely hidden from sight under this impenetrable countenance as a river current under the fettering ice. In his vehicle, which I had shared with him for this stage, he had a gun in a chamois-leather case, and, although it stood close by his hand, he had not stirred that hand to take it out. His hard grey eyes had never left the animals, and, for the first time in the course of my acquaintance with him—but brief, it is true—I thought I caught in those grey orbs a gleam of something not quite cold and not wholly hardened.

When the little incident had thus been happily solved, we all took our seats again, and our caravan moved on, stretching in a long line under cover of the rocky river bank. We all somehow felt happy, and discussed the daring feat of the animal which had managed to preserve such self-possession in the midst of so many dangers.

"Still," I remarked, with a smile, "something must be credited to us, too. It almost looks as though extreme cold has the faculty of awakening kind feelings."

"What makes you think so?" seriously inquired Sokolsky.

"The very unusual way in which the dog Polkan behaved, and also —if you will excuse the comparison—your own conduct: your gun stayed in its case."

"Yes," assented the prospector, "that is true. These poor animals had overcome so many dangers, right before our eyes, that even Polkan, I think, would have been ashamed to end it all with a vulgar murder on the river bank. By the way, did you notice with what self-abnegation the elder goat shielded the younger from the dog? Would every human have acted thus under similar circumstances?"

"Any mother, I should think," I replied, with a smile. "On the whole, this little episode appears to have impressed you deeply."

For Sokolsky's features bore the traces of inner emotion; his eyes had softened to sadness.

"True," he answered, meditatively. "This has reminded me of a man and an experience I had. . . . You just said something about cold in connection with kind feelings. Well, no! Cold—that is death. Has it ever occurred to you, for instance, that it is possible for conscience to freeze to death in a man?"

"Not only that, but it is possible for the whole man to turn into a lump of ice, *i. e.*, to cease being a man," I replied, still smiling. I thought my fellow-traveller's mood more and more peculiar.

"No," he replied in the same gently-sad tone; "no—much sooner. I'll tell you, if you like to hear. . . . Curiously enough, the thing happened in almost this very locality, and now, riding here with you, I feel as though I am living over again the beginning of my story, while you will travel on and meet with its continuation.

IV

"It happened in 18—. At that time I had just received an appointment and was going to the placer with a companion. The autumn had set in late, just like the present one; the winter was delayed, and our progress was slow. Somewhere about here we hit the first ice, the same as now; but, as we advanced, its grip on the river strengthened, the free current narrowed more and more, and, in places, was intercepted by ice jams. Look! You can see from here what it is like. On one spot, huge masses gather, jostle one another, and block the current. The river piles them up higher and higher, smashes the ice, forms rapids, roars, and rages. Miles around, the air is resonant with the rumble and thunder of it. Then the ice breaks through and floats down the current, and here and there, in the middle of the river, free spaces are left, above which hover vapours, dense with frost. I had a companion, an exiled Pole. He had taken part in the great insurrection and had been wounded. Those were cruel times and his wrists and ankles bore the lifelong marks of the irons which convicts had to wear on the long march to their place of exile, in severest winter weather, without any bandages to protect the flesh against the bite of the frozen metal. He was, as a consequence, extremely sensitive to cold. Altogether he was a puny, feeble creature, body and soul just holding together, as the saying is. But in this frail shell lived a mighty spirit. Take him altogether, he was the strangest compound of contradictory qualities. His name was Ignatovitch."

Sokolsky here paused, lost in thought, and for some time we drove on in silence. This silence lasted quite a while, and I was just going to remind him of his interrupted narrative, when he again turned to me.

"I am afraid I cannot make you understand this man's nature,—idealistic, romantic, grown up on his great native poets, Mitskevitch, Krassinsky, Slovatsky. This state of mind, this, let us say, ecstatical hyperbolism, has always been foreign to us Russians. Mitskevitch has a strange poem: Somebody, a gigantic Self, has lifted his head into the superstellar altitudes. All around that head is a crown of suns, the hands reach the stars and, at their touch, their choir, like the keys of some obedient instrument, burst into the symphony of the worlds, the creation of his brain. . . . That's the kind of thing. . . . Such images always left me cold, and it was with some astonishment I used to hear my friend (we lived together about a year in Yakutsk) roll them off with uncommon fire and enthusiasm. Still, while I do not myself perceive any plausibility or beauty in such imagery or such a state of mind, I had to admit that they are capable of awakening responsive emotions: under their influence my little friend seemed to grow, his voice became sonorous, his eyes shone, and something, not the images, which appeared to me as unnatural, as exaggerated and wildly strange—as ever—no, but the sound of his voice, appealed even to me.

"I suppose this may come under the head of romanticism, this hyperbolic conception of man, of the 'Divine' in him, of his titanic import. But this mentality of my friend's lacked consistency. It was, I believe, at the time of those very insurrections which brought him to Siberia that human nature showed him its less attractive and, at all events, anything but divine aspects. Then there was something about a woman. Now, when woman is regarded as abiding in superstellar altitudes, a creature all of light, the wrong side of her essence naturally is apprehended with morbid sensitiveness. However that might be, he had long spells of misanthropy. At such times, he became well-nigh unbearable, especially in the daily contact of intimacy. In his look, cold and piercing, you felt something like contempt,—contempt towards you, a stranger, a passer-by, and towards himself as well. During those periods, he was transformed into a materialist and cynic, so bitter of speech that I used to take myself off, anywhere, and stay away, several days, if possible. In the meantime, he would tend the animals with even more than usual solicitude.

"Love for animals was another striking feature of this strange man. There were lengthy periods when our modest dwelling positively was

turned into a hospital. A week at a time, he would fuss over some half-frozen crow which he had revived, would walk a sick horse twice a day, unheeding jeers and mockeries. And, curious to observe, the more wroth he was with man, the greater was his tenderness to animals. Pessimist and cynic (at such periods) in his relations to 'the king of creation,' he ended by extolling Nature's lesser children above him. He not only recognized in them intellect, memory, reasoning, conscience, but went the length of considering these intellectual attributes as belonging to them, to the exclusion of man. And when this mood was upon him, he became unbearably, devilishly sarcastic and witty, and sometimes, when I had no place to retire to during his spells of misanthropy, and absolutely wilted under his hail of paradoxes, I began, upon my word, to feel inferior to any dumb beast, while some wretched cur, its back half broken by a missile from some idle loafer's hand, almost assumed in my eyes the proportions of a conscious sufferer and philosopher. But when the paroxysm had run its course, he recovered, was himself once more, again soared up into the empyrean, and spouted 'the symphony of the worlds.' It was at such a time he got his appointment to a position at the diggings, something like superintendent of a warehouse of materials. In practical questions, I always was the better man. So it was I who found the position for him and persuaded him to accept it. He submitted passively, and we started as soon as we received the travelling money. Our circumstances were not the most brilliant.

"Still, we travelled rather faster than you are doing now, and, in spite of our clothes being not of the warmest, we had not felt the cold overmuch until we got to Olekma, and even farther on. It was pretty cold, but we would get thoroughly warm when we stopped for the night and feel all right when we started again next morning.

"Beyond Olekma, the river was frozen solid, with just a few open spaces. Once, when driving past one of the holes, we beheld two ducks,—the driver pointed them out with his whip. I could not now make you realize what a pathetic sight it was. They were stragglers. The migrating flock had gone long ago, and these two, from sickness or failing strength, had lagged behind, and were left to perish on the freezing river. So long as the middle, at least, had been free, they had swum, somehow escaping from the ice, then the channel had narrowed more and more, till only these open spaces were left; when

they should close, the birds must perish. Now they were tossing about in clouds of frosty vapor, and nothing all around but the cold impassable mountains, frowning down upon them.

"I remember that the driver laughed, grinned, baring his white teeth. I felt uncomfortable and chilly, and wrapped my big fur coat closer about me, as though the dark, cold element were yawning under my own feet. But my companion flared up in the utmost agitation.

"'Stop!' he shouted at the driver. 'Would you indeed be capable of going on your way, leaving them thus?' He turned to me with bitter reproof, and, without waiting for the driver to rein in the horses, he sprang to the ground; then, slipping and stumbling on the heaped-up blocks of ice, he rushed to the open water.

"The driver laughed like mad, and I myself could not help but smile at the sight of my companion bending over the narrow but long open channel and endeavouring to capture the ducks. They, naturally, rushed away from him. Then my little fellow-traveller ran to the lower end of the channel, correctly calculating that the current would carry the birds to him, the more surely that I, getting interested in the game, also walked out on the ice and drove them down river. They were afraid of diving, because the current would have drawn them under the ice. One of them managed to rise up into the air, but the other was too feeble to attempt flight, possibly having, at some time, had a taste of lead besides, and could only flap powerless wings. Then the other, after circling once or twice above the frozen river, returned to its companion.

"I cannot describe to you the effect this generosity had on my friend. He stood on the ice, following with his eyes the flight of the bird, as it flashed past, against the background of the stern, snow-clad mountains, and, when it splashed down into the water a few steps from the invalid, with the evident self-sacrificing resolve to share its companion's danger, tears stood in his eyes, and he positively declared that we might go on if we chose, but he would stay until he succeeded in securing both ducks.

"I knew that he would inevitably do as he threatened, and so decided to take part in the peculiar hunt, which the driver ended by joining. It resulted in one bird drowning—the very one which had attempted to fly. It escaped out of my hands, dived, and was sucked

under the ice by the current. The other one was caught by the driver; Ignatovitch got a good wetting; the water poured down his sleeves.

"This was serious, as it was quite a distance to the next station. I bundled him up as well as I could; but when we reached the station it was all we could do to rub life into his half-frozen fingers, and we did not exchange a word for the next twenty-four hours. We took the duck along with us, but, although I had helped rescue it, and even got excited over this charitable sport, still I was conscious that it had been silly sentimentality, especially as this extra passenger was made much fun of at every station,—justly, as I had to admit. Ignatovitch felt this my attitude and despised me.

"The duck died, after all, and we threw it away. For several days the snow fell unceasingly, thick and soft as down, and lay twenty inches deep on land and ice. Heavy loads of it burdened the trees and it sometimes fell from them in large lumps, which crumbled to fine dust in the frosty air.

"Then the real cold was upon us: 30-35-40° below zero (Réaumur). At last, at one station, we found the mercury frozen in the tube and were told that it had been so several days already.

"Birds lagged in their flight, flapped their wings convulsively, and dropped to the ground; bears, half frozen in their dens, came out, lean, scared, and wicked. Squirrel hunters had to desist for fear of the angry beasts.

"We, too, began to feel the cold. You know what it means, do you not? When breath fails you,—when, every time you blink, fine threads of ice form between your lashes, when the cold steals under your clothing, under your skin, into your muscles, bores into your bones, into the marrow of them, as the saying aptly expresses it. . . . You begin to shiver, deep down in your inside, a piercing, disagreeable,—nay, humiliating feeling. You arrive at a station-house; it is midnight before you get really warm, and, when you start in the morning, you feel that something has gone out of you; you begin to suffer sooner than you did the day before, and you are still colder when you reach your night's lodging. Your spirits flag, your impressions are dulled, people become objects of dislike. You even loathe yourself. You end by muffling up as closely as possible, setting down as comfortably as you can, and moving, even thinking, as little as possible; you instinctively avoid the least expenditure of energy. And there you sit, gradually

stiffening, only wondering, with a vague fear, when there will be an end of these terrible 40-50-verst relays.

"We at length neared Vitem. We had left the preceding station on a cloudless, brilliant morning. All nature, frigidly beautiful, seemed dead in her amazingly-rich attire. At noon, the sun shone brilliantly, its slanting rays yellow and close set. Breaking through the dense gloom of the pine forest, they played in places on the trunks and boughs, plucking them out of the monotonous, white glimmering twilight.

"The stage had been unusually long. The driver (they did not travel the road very often) had at first been quite brisk and had even risked snatches of some absurd ditty of the diggings, then he had grown silent and every little while got down and alternately ran and hopped along beside the sleigh, violently stamping his feet and clapping his heavy-mittened hands. My fellow-traveller seemed quite numb. All through the day, he had spoken only once, but his voice struck me as creaky and rough and I made a cross reply, hardly intelligible to myself. After that he kept silence, and I could well imagine his face, with its misanthropical and ugly expression. I also held my tongue and turned my face aside, so that my frozen breath should not strike it through the opening in my *bashlik*.

"The road entered the forest. The runners creaked; the horses every little while snorted; then the driver halted and, with his fingers, extracted lumps of ice out of their nostrils. The tall pines swept by like white phantoms, and somehow left no impression on the memory.

"Evening was coming on; the last sunbeams, still denser and more yellow, were retreating from the forest, creeping along the summits, while below, the even, white twilight assumed a cold, bluish tint. The jingling bell gave a peculiarly deep and hard sound, like that of a spoon striking a tumbler filled with liquid. This sound somehow irritated and grated on the nerves

"In one place, I received an unexpected impression: not far from the road a thin thread of smoke was swirling up from among some wind-fallen wood. A man was sitting on a stump, and his figure was the one dark spot in that white world. Over him, from all sides, hung broad white-furred boughs, still illumined from above by the departing sun and encompassed from below with the murkiness of approaching night. The thing just flashed past my fixed stare. At the last

instant, I thought that the figure stirred, and that the movement had something to do with us, with our jingling bell, our swift motion. But I did not turn my head, did not even look that way. The vision flashed past and was gone, and the impressions were conveyed to my brain, numb, lifeless, immovable, waking nothing in it and without stirring the imagination.

"The driver turned to us, said something, and I remember that he laughed. But to me these were only detached sounds, like the tinkle of clashing icicles. The words were void of meaning; they did not, at the moment, convey anything to me. The driver's laugh also was no laugh to me; at least it did not produce on me the impression it would have produced under other conditions. I simply saw an unpleasantly yellowish face framed in a furred hood, and two eyes fringed with rimy lashes. The jaw belonging to the face was working, the mouth was disagreeably distorted, and out of it there issued, along with the vaporized breath, certain empty sounds, like the tinkling of glass. That was all. My companion stirred uneasily and also muttered something. It looked as though he were angrily bidding the driver hurry up.

"The brief day had long died out when we reached the station and made our arrangements for the night.

"It consisted, I mind me, like most such stations, of a group of wretched huts, huddled together under overhanging cliffs. In choosing sites for these stations, little regard was had to the comfort of future inhabitants. This particular station was located on an open stony platform projecting into the river, which here turns in a bend, on a plain open directly to the north. Only a few versts farther on the hamlet might have been sheltered behind a jutting mountain spur, while here it stood absolutely unprotected, a prey to the terrible north wind.

"Ignoring its official denomination, the inhabitants called this 'the cold station.' And, truly, it would have been difficult to find anything more perfectly embodying the idea of cold than this wind-shaken heap of logs, clay, and dung on a snow-covered rocky platform. The forest, which we had left behind, ended where the low meadows began and yielded no protection to the hamlet, merely filling the air with long-drawn-out ominous soughing.

"All the same, we were glad of even such a shelter and were just

in time to thaw out our benumbed limbs. Fortunately, there was, all around, enough wood belonging to no one but God, so that a great fire was soon blazing on the hearth, and we lay down right before it on skins and blankets spread out on the floor, after hastily swallowing a tumbler of tea. Our numb, stiffened hands could with difficulty hold the tumbler, and the sensation of heat was lost; we burned our throats with the scalding liquid, but it did not warm us, so we desisted and crept under our furs. My teeth were still chattering. I felt the shivering chill in my very bones.

"Our host, having finished our tea and given some to the half-frozen driver, added fuel to the fire and disappeared in some corner or other. It grew dark and very still. Outdoors the only sound was a sort of even, hollow rumble as of some giant at intervals treading the frost-bound earth, which then would subside into silence, until the giant started again and the rumble began anew. These spells grew more frequent and lasted longer as the night advanced. At times our hut seemed to rock and shiver, and the rumble would be inside of it, as in an empty wooden box in which the wind plays. Then, in spite of my furs, I would feel the cold steal through the fissures in the floor; it would fan the fire into a brighter blaze and make the sparks fly in bunches up the chimney.

" 'That's bad!' the host said on one such occasion, turning to the sleep-ridden driver. 'How ever will you travel? It's the north wind.'

" 'Yes,' replied the other. 'And the cold has not moderated. With such a wind as that, even the mail won't travel.'

" 'Heaven forbid!' spoke the host, yawning.

"I understood that this was the beginning of a comparatively rare phenomenon,—a frost-storm, when the wind, in a violent rush from some quarter, impinges on the frost-weighted air. The separate shocks and the rumble betokened the wind's first efforts, before it had acquired the power to displace the condensed atmosphere. Soon the shocks lasted longer, the rumble became even, uninterrupted. The air chilled down to 40° below zero (R.), yielded to the pressure, and it was as though gigantic ocean waves were rolling over our denuded platform.

"It was to this weird sound I began to fall asleep, still incompletely conscious of what was going on, with merely animal enjoyment at the

thought that I was under a roof, lying by a good fire, that all the unpleasant numbness and stiffness in me must soon thaw out and limber up.

V

"When and how I found myself wide-awake,—sleep entirely gone from me, I can not say. I awoke gradually and for some time seemed to be still dreaming or carefully treasuring in my memory fragments of a dream, as if fearful it might escape me and I be unable to gather from it something very necessary, very important. Yet the dream was very simple.

"I dreamed that I was again in the forest, travelling the same road, and again I was cold, again I saw around me the frost-laden trees, the yellow, closely set rays of the sun, retreating from the forest and playing in places on the bare trunks and furry boughs. Only somewhere, beyond the forest, there was a dull, hollow reverberation of sound, as though some one was pursuing our sleigh.

"Then I saw a group of trees—standing so close together that their outspread boughs, white with their burden of snow, formed a sort of arbour—and a thin thread of seemingly-expiring smoke, and a dark figure by the dying fire. And, with the absence of logical sequence habitual to dreams, all this somehow took the form of sharp icicles which pierced and chilled my heart.

"Then I saw the driver's face, at first stolid, empty of all expression, but gradually changing, growing familiar; and, under his glance, the icicles in my breast began to melt with torturing rapidity. At the same time, the arbour in the forest rose before me with all the details which I had not noticed before, and each such detail bred peculiar impressions in my imagination, and I was afraid to look at the face of the man, who seemed to be stirring on his stump, but the driver insisted that I should look. I grew angry, but the next instant it was not the driver at all, but Ignatovitch, and, under the influence of his agonizing gaze, all that lay hidden in the depths of my memory as cold, colourless icicles suddenly melted and revived. . . ."

The narrator here paused, but, after a while, went on:

"You surely remember the legendary stories told by mediæval travellers of polar countries: how that words spoken in mid-winter freeze and stay frozen, as little icicles, awaiting the return of the warm

weather, when they thaw and become audible once more. If we take this as a metaphor, it holds a profound meaning. So I now suddenly remembered the words which the driver had spoken on the road and which until this minute had lain somewhere in the deepest recesses of my memory, void of sense. Yes; undoubtedly, he had spoken of that man in the forest, had said that he must have 'gone broke somewhere at the diggings,' and must be tramping it from camp to camp. . . . Only now did these words thaw in my mind and fill my breast with a dull ache.

"With an involuntary groan I opened my eyes. The fire had burned low. The wind was still raging outdoors; my fellow-traveller's face was bending over me.

"Never in my life, either before or after, have I seen anything more awful than that face, illumined by the tremulous flare from the hearth. It was absolutely distorted with horror and a torturing question. The lower jaw trembled, his teeth chattered as with ague.

" 'What is it? For God's sake!' I cried, rising to my feet.

" 'Don't you know?' he said, fixing me with dim, lustreless eyes. 'Tell me, is it but a dream?'

" 'Is what . . . ?'

" 'That which made you groan just now and awake,' he replied gruffly, then looked at me suspiciously, and, seeing I did not answer, he continued to scrutinize my face with the same expression of distrust.

" 'Did you not notice, out there, in the forest . . . a man?'

"I remained silent and involuntarily looked away. He spoke again:

" 'Look here, say something . . . I still think it was a dream. It cannot have been real. We cannot have . . .'

" 'If not a dream, it was almost like one . . . Such cold dulls any impression.'

"He made an impatient movement and abruptly sat down. His eyes flashed with a strange light.

" 'Really?' He said this plaintively, but immediately went on with a sort of wild energy:

" 'Don't lie! Don't squirm! I also lied. I knew it was real. We saw it all. All. That man was rising; he tried to shout something. You know that; and I know it; we knew it then. You will look up excuses . . . Conscience is frozen . . . Oh, yes, of course—it is always so. Let the body's temperature drop two degrees, and conscience

straightway freezes. A natural law. But care for one's personal com forts and vile pharisaic hypocrisy, those do not freeze, oh no! . . Oh, vile! Contemptible!'

"He seized his head in both hands, and several minutes passed i absolute silence. The hut still shivered from time to time, but th rumble had ceased, though I again felt the shocks and had the positiv impression that some one, huge and heavy, was stamping with measure strides over the river, the forest, and the mountain passes.

"'Oh, do get up at last, you . . . you villain!' almost screame Ignatovitch, with frantic hatred. 'Why, you and I, we have murdere a man between us. Do you realize that, selfish animal that you are Get up, man!' he called to the host. 'Call them all . . . My Lord what's to be done now?'

"The host's frightened face appeared in the illumined space aroun the hearth. He had been stirring uneasily the last minute or two listening to the unintelligible, excited talk of the strangers, who spok of murder. Still half asleep, scared,—probably not so much at th words as at the wild energy which sounded in the voice of the all bu crazed man,—he jumped up quickly and began to bundle on his clothe anyhow; then without a word, he opened the door and went out int the night. Our driver also awoke, yawned, rose from his place on th floor and threw a few logs on the fire. He evidently did not under stand what it was all about. A child began to cry in a corner, an we could hear a woman's voice soothing it.

"All these details remain forever graven in my memory, and neve shall I forget that terrible night: the dark hut with the crowd silently pouring into it, and the incessant rumble. Do you know, there is a times something extraordinarily like conscious meaning in the voice of Nature, especially when she threatens."

VI

"See here, won't you tell me the rest?" I inquired after a while, see ing that my companion was lost in thought and appeared to have for gotten all about his narrative staring straight in front of him at th sunlit hills on our side of the river; the river itself and the ice on i we could not see just then, as we were driving across a meadow. M

fellow-travellers were jogging on ahead of us, merrily chatting with their driver.

"Oh, yes, pray excuse me!" the narrator caught himself up. "I got to thinking. These are very sad memories; but, of course, I will tell it all to the end. Where did I stop?"

"You were saying that a crowd was pouring into the hut, summoned, probably, by your host."

"Yes, yes; that's it. He had called them in, thinking there really were murderers to be secured. The men were coming in tumultuously, yawning, crossing themselves, and they pressed all to one side, leaving an open space around us. The corner by the door was soon filled with dark figures, whose frightened faces were turned our way with eager curiosity, those in the foremost rank stretching their necks the better to see us. The last to come in was the *starosta* ('elder') with his assistants. He walked right up to us with a determined air and addressed us rudely, visibly intent on getting up his courage and that of his men.

" 'Well, what evil thing have you been after? Confess before God and our sovereign lord.'

"But when I began to explain, something like disappointment gradually settled on all those countenances. These men's lives were usually so dull and uneventful and my story, confused and incoherent as it was, did not possess for them the thrilling tragic meaning it had for us. There was even a laugh somewhere in a corner.

" 'Why, that must be Mitrokhin, the new settler,' said someone.

" 'It's surely him. He has been hanging around the diggings, they say, for the last three weeks. He's a nuisance.'

" 'That's so,' our driver put in his word as he entered. 'He was here day before yesterday, and asked for a horse. "Take me, for God's sake," he said, "my feet won't carry me." '

" 'Well, and did you?' gruffly asked the *starosta*.

" 'We are tired of all the trouble with these people. Besides, he had no paper,' replied the driver, turning away. 'If he had had a paper, or if he had been brought to us by the authorities, I don't say. But he came alone, and on foot. We do as others do.'

" 'On foot, did you say? How clever of him! It was warm then, while now we have a "norther"—you just figure that out. The man will freeze now. Are the assessor and the doctor going to walk, do

you think? Won't you have to take them back and forward? . . . And you, gentlemen, what do you mean by rousing the crowd for no cause whatever in the middle of the night?'

"'He had a fire,' put in our driver by way of exculpation.

"'For no cause, do you say?' I retorted, feeling the ground slipping from under my feet. 'A man is freezing to death,—isn't that cause enough? We must help.'

"'Help? And how? If God preserves him he will come, and we will take him in. You, Timothy, why did you not pick him up?' he turned again to our driver.

"'Where could I have put him? There were three of us as it was . . . What's to be done now?'

"'He had a fire, so the Lord, maybe, will save him.'

"'Stay!' I cried in anguish. 'This will never do! The man may be dying now, this minute . . . Just listen to this!'

"For a moment there was silence in the room. We could feel the shocks and hear the blows: it was as though something were being pounded in a mortar. And at times imagination added groans, in reality probably the noise of the tree tops in the forest, or the crashing of the ice.

"Here and there a sigh was heard in the hut. Nevertheless, the door kept opening and closing: the men were dropping out one at a time.

"'The Lord save us!' whispered one voice, and another added roughly:

"'We are freezing ourselves. Never a winter but one of our drivers drops dead at one or other of the nearest stations, and more often two. The relays around here are fierce.'

"'Three years ago, Fedko froze dead in this same forest.'

"'Last year it was a woman with a boy.'

"'And was not my grandson frozen?' came an angry voice out of the crowd.

"'In this wind the mail does not travel,' remarked our driver.

The door creaked more and more frequently. The crowd was dispersing.

"'Wait!' I cried, desperately. 'Won't money do it? Ten roubles! Who will go with me?'

"At this moment my glance fell on Ignatovitch's face. He sat on

the bench by the table, speechless, deathly pale, and my heart ached for him. My voice broke. I remember that the *starosta* just then looked at me with sympathy and moved uneasily.

"'Twenty! Thirty! All we have!' I cried, almost panting with excitement.

"'Stop, all of you,' the *starosta* commanded with his loud, rough voice, which instantly arrested the men. 'Don't go, any of you! You heard? They are offering money for what we ought to do regardless of money. It is true that it is a sin we are committing. We should remember God. Well, whose turn is it to go? The old ones—speak up!'

"There was a recoil from the door to the middle of the room. The *starosta* stood at my side, and I never took my eyes off him. He was a middle-aged man, large of build, of swarthy complexion, with rather coarse,—yet pleasing—features and deep-set black eyes that had a determined and somewhat care-worn expression.

"'Oh, man!' he turned to me gruffly, while the crowd started that clamorous hubbub which invariably precedes the discussion of a subject of common interest at a meeting. 'You have a fine conscience, but poor wit. It might have been better had you not mentioned money. I was just going to order a rescue. Now they will have to proceed according to their rules.'

"They did; and a painfully long and complicated proceeding it was. You must know that these post-station drivers (*yamstchiks*) here along the Lena form peculiarly organized station communities, survivals of bygone ages. Land they have none, only their wages. The unit of distribution and assessment 'per soul' is 'a pair of horses.' A 'soul' means a part of a horse with a corresponding part of the salary. All the community's receipts and all the dues it pays are distributed or assessed on this basis. Now my money—casual money at that—had to pass through this distributing machinery; it was to be divided among all the members of the community, the *mir,* which had to appoint those whose turn it was to serve.

"The discussion turned into disputes. The fare by the verst, the parts of horses, old accounts, service by turn, the hauling of fire-wood, carrying the mail and officials, the orphans' share, the feeding of prisoners,—all these items were drawn into the calculation and were discussed hotly and circumstantially. Several times, I attempted to stop

the disputants by sorrowfully reminding them that a man might be perishing while they were squabbling here, but the man nearest to me replied with inflexible seriousness:

" 'Can't be helped. Don't meddle. This is *mir* business. If you interfere, you'll make it worse.'

"The bickering continued. The men did not seem near reaching a decision. The ominous rumble outdoors went on.

"The *starosta* at length seemed to catch my impatience and intervened. He naturally understood the intricacies of the assessment machinery which was so noisily working before our eyes, better than I did, and saw that not a little time would still elapse before it accomplished its task to the general satisfaction. He stepped forward, with one loud call stopped the tumult of voices, then turned to the ikon in the corner and impressively crossed himself with a broad gesture. A few hands in the crowd instinctively were lifted to form the sacred sign. The evil night was beginning to affect even these tough nerves . . .

" 'Brothers,' he began, 'this won't do . . . in the sight of God and Christ's holy Mother. I'm out of it: no money for me. I am going anyhow, turn or no turn . . . If only the Lord will help. Put away your money, sir. If anything, light a taper in church.'

"There was a moment's silence. Then one of the men, who but a minute ago had been hotly disputing about some question of 'turn,' was the first to speak with quiet sympathy:

" 'Well, may God help you . . . If so, it is your own wish . . .'

"Others followed:

" 'It's your lookout.'

" 'An extra job,—of your own free will. . . . After all, a man's soul is worth more than money . . .'

" 'Still, it's pretty nasty out . . . Heaven help us! The mail is held, that's certain.'

" 'Bother the money! . . . Our Lady protect thee, Sofron Semionovitch!'

"I looked with unreasoning relief toward the place where Ignatovitch had been sitting. It seemed to me that in the *starosta's* generous offer, and in the way it was received, there lay a solution of the affair which somehow took the blame from us as well. But Ignatovitch was no longer there.

"Soon the room was empty, except for the host, two or three tarrying men, and myself. My companion was nowhere to be seen. The men said that he had gone out, dressed for the road, before the breaking up of the meeting.

"A dire presentiment gripped my heart. I recalled his pale face while the debates were going on. At first it wore its habitual misanthropical expression with the addition of a certain spiteful contempt for himself and others. But at the last moment I could recall only one of profound, hopeless sadness. That was the moment, when I offered money and the *yamstchiks* began clamouring.

"I stepped out on the porch, looked for him, called him, adding, in case he did hear, that it was all arranged, that I was going at once to the forest after the derelict. But there was no answer, the lights were going out in the windows of the station cabins, the wind kept up its threnody; at times the walls of the smaller mild huts cracked aloud, while from a distance came the groan-like noise of bursting ice.

" 'Calling your companion?' asked one of the men as he was passing the house. 'Why, he went to another cabin to sleep, it was so noisy here.'

"Presently the *starosta's* low broad sleigh, drawn by a good pair of horses, held up before the cabin and he alighted from it, muffled up to the ears in furs, his hands hidden in enormous mittens, and approached me.

" 'What is it?' he inquired. 'Anything new?'

" 'Quick, quick, for God's sake!' I cried, seized with a nervous tremour. I suddenly felt to a certainty that I should find Ignatovitch somewhere on the road.

" 'Well, no,' he said. 'Wait a bit. You can't go like this. Your clothes are not fit to face this wind. Here, I've brought you something. Put it on.'

"He insisted that I should get into the furs he brought me. It was nearly day-break when we started, taking with us more clothes in case of need.

"The wind was violent, and so cold that it burned you. A full moon rode high up in the sky. Below, a so-called 'ground storm' was racing along. Do you know what that is? It is this: the wind lifts the dry snow from the ground and carries it straight in your face, in one even, continuous sheet. It is not a snow-storm, but worse than any snow-

storm. In such weather as that all traffic ceases. In confronting it, we certainly took risks: that ride cost me two fingers which had to be amputated later on."

"Did you find your man?" I asked impatiently, seeing that Sokolsky did not seem inclined to continue his narrative.

"We did," he replied in a flat, toneless sort of voice. "It was a grey morning; the wind had abated; a chill mist was settling down . . . He had a fire, but it had gone out long before . . . He had probably fallen asleep. However, his eyes were open and there was frost on the pupils."

"And your companion? Had he really stayed behind in the station village?"

Sokolsky looked at me with dull, lustreless eyes.

"I was deeply convinced," he said, "that he had taken the road to the forest, and therefore I kept shouting and calling all the way and peering into the darkness of the wood. The *starosta* endeavoured to calm me. For one thing, he could not conceive that a man should gratuitously have gone to certain death; then there was but one road from the station or village, broad, with guide poles planted all along, excluding the possibility of losing one's way, especially on a moonlit night.

"When we returned with our sad burden, well wrapped in furs, lying in the bottom of the sleigh, it was already morning. The wind had quieted and the cold had suddenly abated. Then the sun rose. There were no traces anywhere."

"So you were mistaken after all?"

"We reached the station. He was not there."

Sokolsky was silent after this, and an expression of great tenderness softened his somewhat rugged features.

"He was unpractical and helpless as a child," he spoke again. "He never could find his way. He left the cabin intending to rescue the man, but . . . started in the opposite direction." Sokolsky turned quite round to me. "Can you imagine such a thing? Started in the opposite direction and kept straight on! Now the road on that side is just as broad as on the other and also soon enters the forest. And next day, in the more sheltered places of the dense growth, tracks were discovered. They made a straight trail, never turning right or

left. He had walked a very long distance, without swerving until . . ."

Sokolsky was silent again, and kept looking aside for a quite a while.

"Did he hope to save that unknown man? . . . I don't think so. He went, just as he was, taking nothing but tinder and steel, which, however, he hardly would have known how to handle. A perfect child, I tell you! He simply could not stand it any longer . . . And another thing . . . It occurs to me at times that he wanted to chastise in his own person the vile human nature which allows conscience to freeze to death if the body's temperature sinks 2°. In him the romantic idealist sentenced and executed the materialist."

Another silence.

"You said, I believe, 'the vile human nature'?" I began after an interval.

He looked round at me, as if somewhat astonished.

"Oh, yes. I see . . . I don't know, I don't know! I simply know nothing. Or, I know just one thing: that often those perish who should not, while we remain, who . . ."

He ended the sentence with a wave of his hand and all the rest of the time we rode in silence, until, from behind a declivity, appeared slight clouds of smoke, belonging to the station at which we were to part company. Sokolsky was in a great hurry to rejoin his prospecting party and hastened ahead, while we were compelled to travel more slowly.

VII

Some two days later, we were traversing a dense woods, when our driver, a young lad, indeed, a mere boy, showed me, pointing with his whip a large stone cross erected in the thickest of it, at the side of the road, and said:

"A man froze to death here, indeed two men. Sokolsky put up the cross,—the prospector, maybe you know him? He passed this way yesterday. See, those are his tracks."

And, really, there, on the deep snow, illumined by some stray sunbeams which had found their way through the dense boughs, was, plainly to be seen, a man's large track, leading to the cross and back.

"He never passes the place," went on the lad, turning round on his

narrow driver's seat and smiling, "but he alights, stands there quite some time, then goes back, and drives on. He does not cross himself, but you can see that he prays, sometimes even with tears. Queer, but a good sort."

He flicked his horse and added, thoughtfully:

"Must have been friends of his."

The Sire de Maletroit's Door

BY ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

(*1850-1894*)

Denis de Beaulieu was not yet two-and-twenty, but he counted himself a grown man, and a very accomplished cavalier into the bargain. Lads were early formed in that rough, warfaring epoch; and when one has been in a pitched battle and a dozen raids, has killed one's man in an honorable fashion, and knows a thing or two of strategy and mankind, a certain swagger in the gait is surely to be pardoned. He had put up his horse with due care, and supped with due deliberation; and then, in a very agreeable frame of mind, went out to pay a visit in the gray of the evening. It was not a very wise proceeding on the young man's part. He would have done better to remain beside the fire or go decently to bed. For the town was full of the troops of Burgundy and England under a mixed command; and though Denis was there on safe-conduct, his safe-conduct was like to serve him little on a chance encounter.

It was September, 1429; the weather had fallen sharp; a flighty piping wind, laden with showers, beat about the township; and the dead leaves ran riot along the streets. Here and there a window was already lighted up; and the noise of men-at-arms making merry over supper within, came forth in fits and was swallowed up and carried away by the wind. The night fell swiftly; the flag of England, fluttering on the spire-top, grew ever fainter and fainter against the flying clouds—a black speck like a swallow in the tumultuous, leaden chaos of the sky. As the night fell the wind rose, and began to hoot under archways and roar amid the treetops in the valley below the town.

Denis de Beaulieu walked fast and was soon knocking at his friend's door; but though he promised himself to stay only a little while and make an early return, his welcome was so pleasant, and he found so much to delay him, that it was already long past midnight before he

said good-by upon the threshold. The wind had fallen again in the meanwhile; the night was as black as the grave; not a star, nor a glimmer of moonshine, slipped through the canopy of cloud. Denis was ill-acquainted with the intricate lanes of Chateau Landon; even by daylight he had found some trouble in picking his way; and in this absolute darkness he soon lost it altogether. He was certain of one thing only—to keep mounting the hill; for his friend's house lay at the lower end or tail, of Chateau Landon, while the inn was up at the head, under the great church spire. With this clew to go upon he stumbled and groped forward, now breathing more freely in open places where there was a good slice of sky overhead, now feeling along the wall in stifling closes. It is an eerie and mysterious position to be thus submerged in opaque blackness in an almost unknown town. The silence is terrifying in its possibilities. The touch of cold window bars to the exploring hand startles the man like the touch of a toad; the inequalities of the pavement shake his heart into his mouth; a piece of denser darkness threatens an ambuscade or a chasm in the pathway; and where the air is brighter, the houses put on strange and bewildering appearances, as if to lead him further from his way. For Denis, who had to regain his inn without attracting notice, there was real danger as well as mere discomfort in the walk; and he went warily and boldly at once, and at every corner paused to make an observation.

He had been for some time threading a lane so narrow that he could touch a wall with either hand, when it began to open out and go sharply downward. Plainly this lay no longer in the direction of his inn; but the hope of a little more light tempted him forward to reconnoiter. The lane ended in a terrace with a bartizan wall, which gave an outlook between high houses, as out of an embrasure, into the valley lying dark and formless several hundred feet below. Denis looked down, and could discern a few treetops waving and a single speck of brightness where the river ran across a weir. The weather was clearing up, and the sky had lightened, so as to show the outline of the heavier clouds and the dark margin of the hills. By the uncertain glimmer, the house on his left hand should be a place of some pretensions; it was surmounted by several pinnacles and turret-tops; the round stern of a chapel, with a fringe of flying buttresses, projected boldly from the main block; and the door was sheltered under a deep

porch carved with figures and overhung by two long gargoyles. The windows of the chapel gleamed through their intricate tracery with a light as of many tapers, and threw out the buttresses and the peaked roof in a more intense blackness against the sky. It was plainly the hotel of some great family of the neighborhood; and as it reminded Denis of a town house of his own at Bourges, he stood for some time gazing up at it and mentally gauging the skill of the architects and the consideration of the two families.

There seemed to be no issue to the terrace but the lane by which he had reached it; he could only retrace his steps, but he had gained some notion of his whereabout, and hoped by this means to hit the main thoroughfare and speedily regain the inn. He was reckoning without that chapter of accidents which was to make this night memorable above all others in his career; for he had not gone back above a hundred yards before he saw a light coming to meet him, and heard loud voices speaking together in the echoing narrows of the lane. It was a party of men-at-arms going the night round with torches. Denis assured himself that they had all been making free with the wine-bowl, and were in no mood to be particular about safe-conducts or the niceties of chivalrous war. It was as like as not that they would kill him like a dog and leave him where he fell. The situation was inspiring but nervous. Their own torches would conceal him from sight, he reflected; and he hoped that they would drown the noise of his footsteps with their own empty voices. If he were but fleet and silent, he might evade their notice altogether.

Unfortunately, as he turned to beat a retreat, his foot rolled upon a pebble; he fell against the wall with an ejaculation, and his sword rang loudly on the stones. Two or three voices demanded who went there—some in French, some in English; but Denis made no reply, and ran the faster down the lane. Once upon the terrace, he paused to look back. They still kept calling after him, and just then began to double the pace in pursuit, with a considerable clank of armor, and great tossing of the torchlight to and fro in the narrow jaws of the passage.

Denis cast a look around and darted into the porch. There he might escape observation, or—if that were too much to expect—was in a capital posture whether for parley or defense. So thinking, he drew his sword and tried to set his back against the door. To his surprise,

it yielded behind his weight; and though he turned in a moment, con tinued to swing back on oiled and noiseless hinges, until it stood wide open on a black interior. When things fall out opportunely for the person concerned, he is not apt to be critical about the how or why his own immediate personal convenience seeming a sufficient reason for the strangest oddities and resolutions in our sublunary things; and so Denis, without a moment's hesitation, stepped within and partly closed the door behind him to conceal his place of refuge. Nothing was further from his thoughts than to close it altogether; but for some inexplicable reason—perhaps by a spring or a weight—the ponderous mass of oak whipped itself out of his fingers and clanked to, with a formidable rumble and a noise like the falling of an automatic bar.

The round, at that very moment, debouched upon the terrace and proceeded to summon him with shouts and curses. He heard them ferreting in the dark corners; the stock of a lance even rattled along the outer surface of the door behind which he stood; but these gentlemen were in too high a humor to be long delayed, and soon made off down a corkscrew pathway which had escaped Denis's observation, and passed out of sight and hearing along the battlements of the town.

Denis breathed again. He gave them a few minutes' grace for fear of accidents, and then groped about for some means of opening the door and slipping forth again. The inner surface was quite smooth not a handle, not a molding, not a projection of any sort. He got his finger-nails round the edges and pulled, but the mass was immovable. He shook it, it was as firm as a rock. Denis de Beaulieu frowned and gave vent to a little noiseless whistle. What ailed the door? he wondered. Why was it open? How came it to shut so easily and so effectually after him? There was something obscure and underhand about all this that was little to the young man's fancy. It looked like a snare; and yet who could suppose a snare in such a quiet by-street and in a house of so prosperous and even noble an exterior? And yet—snare or no snare, intentionally or unintentionally—here he was prettily trapped; and for the life of him he could see no way out of it again. The darkness began to weigh upon him. He gave ear; all was silent without, but within and close by he seemed to catch a faint sighing, a faint sobbing rustle, a little stealthy creak—as though many persons were at his side, holding themselves quite still, and governing even their respiration with the extreme of slyness. The idea went to his

vitals with a shock, and he faced about suddenly as if to defend his life. Then, for the first time, he became aware of a light about the level of his eyes and at some distance in the interior of the house—a vertical thread of light, widening toward the bottom, such as might escape between two wings of arras over a doorway. To see anything was a relief to Denis; it was like a piece of solid ground to a man laboring in a morass; his mind seized upon it with avidity; and he stood staring at it and trying to piece together some logical conception of his surroundings. Plainly there was a flight of steps ascending from his own level to that of this illuminated doorway; and indeed he thought he could make out another thread of light, as fine as a needle and as faint as phosphorescence, which might very well be reflected along the polished wood of a handrail. Since he had begun to suspect that he was not alone, his heart had continued to beat with smothering violence, and an intolerable desire for action of any sort had possessed itself of his spirit. He was in deadly peril, he believed. What could be more natural than to mount the staircase, lift the curtain, and confront his difficulty at once? At least he would be dealing with something, tangible; at least he would be no longer in the dark. He stepped slowly forward with outstretched hands, until his foot struck the bottom step; then he rapidly scaled the stairs, stood for a moment to compose his expression, lifted the arras and went in.

He found himself in a large apartment of polished stone. There were three doors; one on each of three sides; all similarly curtained with tapestry. The fourth side was occupied by two large windows and a great stone chimney-piece, carved with the arms of the Maletroits. Denis recognized the bearings, and was gratified to find himself in such good hands. The room was strongly illuminated; but it contained little furniture except a heavy table and a chair or two, the hearth was innocent of fire, and the pavement was but sparsely strewn with rushes clearly many days old.

On a high chair beside the chimney, and directly facing Denis as he entered, sat a little old gentleman in a fur tippet. He sat with his legs crossed and his hands folded, and a cup of spiced wine stood by his elbow on a bracket on the wall. His countenance had a strongly masculine cast; not properly human, but such as we see in the bull, the goat, or the domestic boar; something equivocal and wheedling, something greedy, brutal, and dangerous. The upper lip was in-

ordinately full, as though swollen by a blow or a toothache; and the smile, the peaked eyebrows, and the small, strong eyes were quaintly and almost comically evil in expression. Beautiful white hair hung straight all round his head, like a saint's, and fell in a single curl upon the tippet. His beard and mustache were the pink of venerable sweetness. Age, probably in consequence of inordinate precautions, had left no mark upon his hands; and the Maletroit hand was famous. It would be difficult to imagine anything at once so fleshy and so delicate in design; the taper, sensual fingers were like those of one of Leonardo's women; the fork of the thumb made a dimpled protuberance when closed; the nails were perfectly shaped, and of a dead, surprising whiteness. It rendered his aspect tenfold more redoubtable, that a man with hands like these should keep them devoutly folded in his lap like a virgin martyr—that a man with so intense and startling an expression of face should sit patiently on his seat and contemplate people with an unwinking stare, like a god, or a god's statue. His quiescence seemed ironical and treacherous, it fitted so poorly with his looks.

Such was Alain, Sire de Maletroit.

Denis and he looked silently at each other for a second or two.

"Pray step in," said the Sire de Maletroit. "I have been expecting you all the evening."

He had not risen, but he accompanied his words with a smile and a slight but courteous inclination of the head. Partly from the smile, partly from the strange musical murmur with which the Sire prefaced his observation, Denis felt a strong shudder of disgust go through his marrow. And what with disgust and honest confusion of mind, he could scarcely get words together in reply.

"I fear," he said, "that this is a double accident. I am not the person you suppose me. It seems you were looking for a visit; but for my part, nothing was further from my thoughts—nothing could be more contrary to my wishes—than this intrusion."

"Well, well," replied the old gentleman indulgently, "here you are, which is the main point. Seat yourself, my friend, and put yourself entirely at your ease. We shall arrange our little affairs presently."

Denis perceived that the matter was still complicated with some misconception, and he hastened to continue his explanations.

"Your door . . ." he began.

"About my door?" asked the other, raising his peaked eyebrows. "A little piece of ingenuity." And he shrugged his shoulders. "A hospitable fancy! By your own account, you were not desirous of making my acquaintance. We old people look for such reluctance now and then; and when it touches our honor, we cast about until we find some way of overcoming it. You arrive uninvited, but, believe me, very welcome."

"You persist in error, sir," said Denis. "There can be no question between you and me. I am a stranger in this countryside. My name is Denis, damoiseau de Beaulieu. If you see me in your house, it is only—"

"My young friend," interrupted the other, "you will permit me to have my own ideas on that subject. They probably differ from yours at the present moment," he added with a leer, "but time will show which of us is in the right."

Denis was convinced he had to do with a lunatic. He seated himself with a shrug, content to wait the upshot; and a pause ensued, during which he thought he could distinguish a hurried gabbling as of prayer from behind the arras immediately opposite him. Sometimes there seemed to be but one person engaged; sometimes two; and the vehemence of the voice, low as it was, seemed to indicate either great haste or an agony of spirit. It occurred to him that this piece of tapestry covered the entrance to the chapel he had noticed from without.

The old gentleman meanwhile surveyed Denis from head to foot with a smile, and from time to time emitted little noises like a bird or a mouse, which seemed to indicate a high degree of satisfaction. This state of matters became rapidly insupportable; and Denis, to put an end to it, remarked politely that the wind had gone down.

The old gentleman fell into a fit of silent laughter, so prolonged and violent that he became quite red in the face. Denis got upon his feet at once, and put on his hat with a flourish.

"Sir," he said, "if you are in your wits, you have affronted me grossly. If you are out of them, I flatter myself I can find better employment for my brains than to talk with lunatics. My conscience is clear; you have made a fool of me from the first moment; you have refused to hear my explanations; and now there is no power under God will make me stay here any longer; and if I cannot make

my way out in a more decent fashion, I will hack your door in pieces with my sword."

The Sire de Maletroit raised his right hand and wagged it at Denis with the fore and little fingers extended.

"My dear nephew," he said, "sit down."

"Nephew!" retorted Denis, "you lie in your throat;" and he snapped his fingers in his face.

"Sit down, you rogue!" cried the old gentleman, in a sudden, harsh voice, like the barking of a dog. "Do you fancy," he went on, "that when I had made my little contrivance for the door I had stopped short with that? If you prefer to be bound hand and foot till your bones ache, rise and try to go away. If you choose to remain a free young buck, agreeably conversing with an old gentleman—why, sit where you are in peace, and God be with you."

"Do you mean I am a prisoner?" demanded Denis.

"I state the facts," replied the other. "I would rather leave the conclusion to yourself."

Denis sat down again. Externally he managed to keep pretty calm; but within, he was now boiling with anger, now chilled with apprehension. He no longer felt convinced that he was dealing with a madman. And if the old gentleman was sane, what, in God's name, had he to look for? What absurd or tragical adventure had befallen him? What countenance was he to assume?

While he was thus unpleasantly reflecting, the arras that overhung the chapel door was raised, and a tall priest in his robes came forth and, giving a long, keen stare at Denis, said something in an undertone to Sire de Maletroit.

"She is in a better frame of spirit?" asked the latter.

"She is more resigned, messire," replied the priest.

"Now the Lord help her, she is hard to please!" sneered the old gentleman. "A likely stripling—not ill-born—and of her own choosing, too? Why, what more would the jade have?"

"The situation is not usual for a young damsel," said the other, "and somewhat trying to her blushes."

"She should have thought of that before she began the dance? It was none of my choosing, God knows that: but since she is in it, by our lady, she shall carry it to the end." And then addressing Denis, "Monsieur de Beaulieu," he asked, "may I present you to my niece?

She has been waiting your arrival, I may say, with even greater impatience than myself."

Denis had resigned himself with a good grace—all he desired was to know the worst of it as speedily as possible; so he rose at once, and bowed in acquiescence. The Sire de Maletroit followed his example and limped, with the assistance of the chaplain's arm, toward the chapel door. The priest pulled aside the arras, and all three entered. The building had considerable architectural pretensions. A light groining sprang from six stout columns, and hung down in two rich pendants from the center of the vault. The place terminated behind the altar in a round end, embossed and honeycombed with a superfluity of ornament in relief, and pierced by many little windows shaped like stars, trefoils, or wheels. These windows were imperfectly glazed, so that the night air circulated freely in the chapel. The tapers, of which there must have been half a hundred burning on the altar, were unmercifully blown about; and the light went through many different phases of brilliancy and semi-eclipse. On the steps in front of the altar knelt a young girl richly attired as a bride. A chill settled over Denis as he observed her costume; he fought with desperate energy against the conclusion that was being thrust upon his mind; it could not —it should not—be as he feared.

"Blanche," said the Sire, in his most flute-like tones, "I have brought a friend to see you, my little girl; turn round and give him your pretty hand. It is good to be devout; but it is necessary to be polite, my niece."

The girl rose to her feet and turned toward the newcomers. She moved all of a piece; and shame and exhaustion were expressed in every line of her fresh young body; and she held her head down and kept her eyes upon the pavement, as she came slowly forward. In the course of her advance, her eyes fell upon Denis de Beaulieu's feet—feet of which he was justly vain, be it remarked, and wore in the most elegant accouterment even while traveling. She paused—started, as if his yellow boots had conveyed some shocking meaning—and glanced suddenly up into the wearer's countenance. Their eyes met; shame gave place to horror and terror in her looks; the blood left her lips; with a piercing scream she covered her face with her hands and sank upon the chapel floor.

"That is not the man!" she cried. "My uncle, that is not the man!"

The Sire de Maletroit chirped agreeably. "Of course not," he said, "I expected as much. It was so unfortunate you could not remember his name."

"Indeed," she cried, "indeed, I have never seen this person till this moment—I have never so much as set eyes upon him—I never wish to see him again. Sir," she said, turning to Denis, "if you are a gentleman, you will bear me out. Have I ever seen you—have you ever seen me—before this accursed hour?"

"To speak for myself, I have never had that pleasure," answered the young man. "This is the first time, messire, that I have met with your engaging niece."

The old gentleman shrugged his shoulders.

"I am distressed to hear it," he said. "But it is never too late to begin. I had little more acquaintance with my own late lady ere I married her; which proves," he added with a grimace, "that these impromptu marriages may often produce an excellent understanding in the long run. As the bridegroom is to have a voice in the matter, I will give him two hours to make up for lost time before we proceed with the ceremony." And he turned toward the door, followed by the clergyman.

The girl was on her feet in a moment. "My uncle, you cannot be in earnest," she said. "I declare before God I will stab myself rather than be forced on that young man. The heart rises at it; God forbids such marriages; you dishonor your white hair. Oh, my uncle, pity me! There is not a woman in all the world but would prefer death to such a nuptial. Is it possible," she added, faltering—"is it possible that you do not believe me—that you still think this"—and she pointed at Denis with a tremor of anger and contempt—"that you still think this to be the man?"

"Frankly," said the old gentleman, pausing on the threshold, "I do. But let me explain to you once for all, Blanche de Maletroit, my way of thinking about this affair. When you took it into your head to dishonor my family and the name that I have borne, in peace and war, for more than threescore years, you forfeited, not only the right to question my designs, but that of looking me in the face. If your father had been alive, he would have spat on you and turned you out of doors. His was the hand of iron. You may bless your God you have only to deal with the hand of velvet, mademoiselle. It was

my duty to get you married without delay. Out of pure goodwill, I have tried to find your own gallant for you. And I believe I have succeeded. But before God and all the holy angels, Blanche de Maletroit, if I have not, I care not one jack-straw. So let me recommend you to be polite to our young friend; for upon my word, your next groom may be less appetizing."

And with that he went out, with the chaplain at his heels; and the arras fell behind the pair.

The girl turned upon Denis with flashing eyes.

"And what, sir," she demanded, "may be the meaning of all this?"

"God knows," returned Denis gloomily. "I am a prisoner in this house, which seems full of mad people. More I know not; and nothing do I understand."

"And pray how came you here?" she asked.

He told her as briefly as he could. "For the rest," he added, "perhaps you will follow my example, and tell me the answer to all these riddles, and what, in God's name, is like to be the end of it."

She stood silent for a little, and he could see her lips tremble and her tearless eyes burn with a feverish luster. Then she pressed her forehead in both hands.

"Alas, how my head aches!" she said wearily—"to say nothing of my poor heart! But it is due to you to know my story, unmaidenly as it must seem. I am called Blanche de Maletroit; I have been without father or mother for—oh! for as long as I can recollect, and indeed I have been most unhappy all my life. Three months ago a young captain began to stand near me every day in church. I could see that I pleased him; I am much to blame, but I was so glad that anyone should love me; and when he passed me a letter, I took it home with me and read it with great pleasure. Since that time he has written many. He was so anxious to speak with me, poor fellow! and kept asking me to leave the door open some evening that we might have two words upon the stair. For he knew how much my uncle trusted me." She gave something like a sob at that, and it was a moment before she could go on. "My uncle is a hard man, but he is very shrewd," she said at last. "He has performed many feats in war, and was a great person at court, and much trusted by Queen Isabeau in old days. How he came to suspect me I cannot tell; but it is hard to keep anything from his knowledge; and this morning, as we came

from mass, he took my hand in his, forced it open, and read my little billet, walking by my side all the while. When he had finished, he gave it back to me with great politeness. It contained another request to have the door left open; and this has been the ruin of us all. My uncle kept me strictly in my room until evening, and then ordered me to dress myself as you see me—a hard mockery for a young girl, do you not think so? I suppose, when he could not prevail with me to tell him the young captain's name, he must have laid a trap for him: into which, alas! you have fallen in the anger of God. I looked for much confusion; for how could I tell whether he was willing to take me for his wife on these sharp terms? He might have been trifling with me from the first; or I might have made myself too cheap in his eyes. But truly I had not looked for such a shameful punishment as this! I could not think that God would let a girl be so disgraced before a young man. And now I have told you all; and I can scarcely hope that you will not despise me."

Denis made her a respectful inclination.

"Madam," he said, "you have honored me by your confidence. It remains for me to prove that I am not unworthy of the honor. Is Messire de Maletroit at hand?"

"I believe he is writing in the salle without," she answered.

"May I lead you thither, madam?" asked Denis, offering his hand with his most courtly bearing.

She accepted it; and the pair passed out of the chapel, Blanche in a very drooping and shamefast condition, but Denis strutting and ruffling in the consciousness of a mission, and the boyish certainty of accomplishing it with honor.

The Sire de Maletroit rose to meet them with an ironical obeisance.

"Sir," said Denis, with the grandest possible air, "I believe I am to have some say in the matter of this marriage; and let me tell you at once, I will be no party to forcing the inclination of this young lady. Had it been freely offered to me, I should have been proud to accept her hand, for I perceive she is as good as she is beautiful; but as things are, I have now the honor, messire, of refusing."

Blanche looked at him with gratitude in her eyes; but the old gentleman only smiled and smiled, until his smile grew positively sickening to Denis.

"I am afraid," he said, "Monsieur de Beaulieu, that you do not

perfectly understand the choice I have to offer you. Follow me, I beseech you, to this window." And he led the way to one of the large windows which stood open on the night. "You observe," he went on, "there is an iron ring in the upper masonry, and, reeved through that, a very efficacious rope. Now, mark my words: if you should find your disinclination to my niece's person insurmountable, I shall have you hanged out of this window before sunrise. I shall only proceed to such an extremity with the greatest regret, you may believe me. For it is not at all your death that I desire, but my niece's establishment in life. At the same time, it must come to that if you prove obstinate. Your family, Monsieur de Beaulieu, is very well in its way; but if you sprang from Charlemagne, you should not refuse the hand of a Maletroit with impunity—not if she had been as common as the Paris road —not if she were so hideous as the gargoyle over my door. Neither my niece nor you nor my own private feelings move me at all in this matter. The honor of my house has been compromised; I believe you to be the guilty person; at least you are now in the secret; and you can hardly wonder if I request you to wipe out the stain. If you will not, your blood be on your own head! It will be no great satisfaction to me to have your interesting relics kicking their heels in the breeze below my windows; but half a loaf is better than no bread, and if I cannot cure the dishonor, I shall at least stop the scandal."

There was a pause.

"I believe there are other ways of settling such imbroglios among gentlemen," said Denis. "You wear a sword, and I hear you have used it with distinction."

The Sire de Maletroit made a signal to the chaplain, who crossed the room with long silent strides and raised the arras over the third of the three doors. It was only a moment before he let it fall again; but Denis had time to see a dusky passage full of armed men.

"When I was a little younger, I should have been delighted to honor you, Monsieur de Beaulieu," said Sire Alain; "but I am now too old. Faithful retainers are the sinews of age, and I must employ the strength I have. This is one of the hardest things to swallow as a man grows up in years; but with a little patience, even this becomes habitual. You and the lady seem to prefer the salle for what remains of your two hours; and as I have no desire to cross your preference, I shall resign it to your use with all the pleasure in the world. No haste!"

he added, holding up his hand, as he saw a dangerous look come into Denis de Beaulieu's face. "If your mind revolts against hanging, it will be time enough two hours hence to throw yourself out of the window or upon the pikes of my retainers. Two hours of life are always two hours. A great many things may turn up in even as little a while as that. And, besides, if I understand her appearance, my niece has still something to say to you. You will not disfigure your last hours by a want of politeness to a lady?"

Denis looked at Blanche, and she made him an imploring gesture.

It is likely that the old gentleman was hugely pleased at this symptom of an understanding; for he smiled on both, and added sweetly: "If you will give me your word of honor, Monsieur de Beaulieu, to await my return at the end of the two hours before attempting anything desperate, I shall withdraw my retainers, and let you speak in greater privacy with mademoiselle."

Denis again glanced at the girl, who seemed to beseech him to agree.

"I give you my word of honor," he said.

Messire de Maletroit bowed, and proceeded to limp about the apartment, clearing his throat the while with that odd musical chirp which had already grown so irritating in the ears of Denis de Beaulieu. He first possessed himself of some papers which lay upon the table; then he went to the mouth of the passage and appeared to give an order to the men behind the arras; and lastly he hobbled out through the door by which Denis had come in, turning upon the threshold to address a last smiling bow to the young couple, and followed by the chaplain with a hand-lamp.

No sooner were they alone than Blanche advanced toward Denis with her hands extended. Her face was flushed and excited, and her eyes shone with tears.

"You shall not die!" she cried, "you shall marry me after all."

"You seem to think, madam," replied Denis, "that I stand much in fear of death."

"Oh, no, no," she said, "I see you are no poltroon. It is for my own sake—I could not bear to have you slain for such a scruple."

"I am afraid," returned Denis, "that you underrate the difficulty, madam. What you may be too generous to refuse, I may be too proud to accept. In a moment of noble feeling toward me, you forget what you perhaps owe to others." He had the decency to keep his eyes

upon the floor as he said this, and after he had finished, so as not to spy upon her confusion. She stood silent for a moment, then walked suddenly away, and falling on her uncle's chair, fairly burst out sobbing. Denis was in the acme of embarrassment. He looked round, as if to seek for inspiration, and seeing a stool, plumped down upon it for something to do. There he sat, playing with the guard of his rapier, and wishing himself dead a thousand times over, and buried in the nastiest kitchen-heap in France. His eyes wandered round the apartment, but found nothing to arrest them. There were such wide spaces between the furniture, the light fell so badly and cheerlessly over all, the dark outside air looked in so coldly through the windows, that he thought he had never seen a church so vast, nor a tomb so melancholy. The regular sobs of Blanche de Maletroit measured out the time like the ticking of a clock. He read the device upon the shield over and over again, until his eyes became obscured; he stared into shadowy corners until he imagined they were swarming with horrible animals; and every now and again he awoke with a start, to remember that his last two hours were running, and death was on the march.

Oftener and oftener, as the time went on, did his glance settle on the girl herself. Her face was bowed forward and covered with her hands, and she was shaken at intervals by the convulsive hiccup of grief. Even thus she was not an unpleasant object to dwell upon, so plump and yet so fine, with a warm brown skin, and the most beautiful hair, Denis thought, in the whole world of womankind. Her hands were like her uncle's; but they were more in place at the end of her young arms, and looked infinitely soft and caressing. He remembered how her blue eyes had shone upon him, full of anger, pity, and innocence. And the more he dwelt on her perfections, the uglier death looked, and the more deeply was he smitten with penitence at her continued tears. Now he felt that no man could have the courage to leave a world which contained so beautiful a creature; and how he would have given forty minutes of his last hour to have unsaid his cruel speech.

Suddenly a hoarse and ragged peal of cockcrow rose to their ears from the dark valley below the windows. And this shattering noise in the silence of all around was like a light in a dark place, and shook them both out of their reflections.

"Alas, can I do nothing to help you?" she said, looking up.

"Madam," replied Denis, with a fine irrelevancy, "if I have said

anything to wound you, believe me, it was for your own sake and not for mine."

She thanked him with a tearful look.

"I feel your position cruelly," he went on. "The world has been bitter hard on you. Your uncle is a disgrace to mankind. Believe me, madam, there is no young gentleman in all France but would be glad of my opportunity, to die in doing you a momentary service."

"I know already that you can be very brave and generous," she answered. "What I want to know is whether I can serve you—now or afterward," she added, with a quaver.

"Most certainly," he answered with a smile. "Let me sit beside you as if I were a friend, instead of a foolish intruder; try to forget how awkwardly we are placed to one another; make my last moments go pleasantly; and you will do me the chief service possible."

"You are very gallant," she added, with a yet deeper sadness . . . "very gallant . . . and it somehow pains me. But draw nearer, if you please; and if you find anything to say to me, you will at least make certain of a very friendly listener. Ah! Monsieur de Beaulieu," she broke forth—"ah! Monsieur de Beaulieu, how can I look you in the face?" And she fell to weeping again with a renewed effusion.

"Madam," said Denis, taking her hand in both of his, "reflect on the little time I have before me, and the great bitterness into which I am cast by the sight of your distress. Spare me, in my last moments, the spectacle of what I cannot cure even with the sacrifice of my life."

"I am very selfish," answered Blanche. "I will be braver, Monsieur de Beaulieu, for your sake. But think if I can do you no kindness in the future—if you have no friends to whom I could carry your adieus. Charge me as heavily as you can; every burden will lighten, by so little, the invaluable gratitude I owe you. Put it in my power to do something more for you than weep."

"My mother is married again, and has a young family to care for. My brother Guichard will inherit my fiefs; and if I am not in error, that will content him amply for my death. Life is a little vapor that passeth away, as we are told by those in holy orders. When a man is in a fair way and sees all life open in front of him, he seems to himself to make a very important figure in the world. His horse whinnies to him; the trumpets blow and the girls look out of windows as he rides into town before his company; he receives many assurances of

trust and regard—sometimes by express in a letter—sometimes face to face, with persons of great consequence falling on his neck. It is not wonderful if his head is turned for a time. But once he is dead, were he as brave as Hercules or as wise as Solomon, he is soon forgotten. It is not ten years since my father fell, with many other knights around him, in a very fierce encounter, and I do not think that anyone of them, nor so much as the name of the fight, is now remembered. No, no, madam, the nearer you come to it, you see that death is a dark and dusty corner, where a man gets into his tomb and has the door shut after him till the judgment day. I have few friends just now, and once I am dead I shall have none."

"Ah, Monsieur de Beaulieu!" she exclaimed, "you forget Blanche de Maletroit."

"You have a sweet nature, madam, and you are pleased to estimate a little service far beyond its worth."

"It is not that," she answered. "You mistake me if you think I am so easily touched by my own concerns. I say so, because you are the noblest man I have ever met; because I recognize in you a spirit that would have made even a common person famous in the land."

"And yet here I die in a mousetrap—with no more noise about it than my own squeaking," answered he.

A look of pain crossed her face, and she was silent for a little while. Then a light came into her eyes and with a smile she spoke again.

"I cannot have my champion think meanly of himself. Anyone who gives his life for another will be met in Paradise by all the heralds and angels of the Lord God. And you have no such cause to hang your head. For . . . Pray, do you think me beautiful?" she asked, with a deep flush.

"Indeed, madam, I do," he said.

"I am glad of that," she answered heartily. "Do you think there are many men in France who have been asked in marriage by a beautiful maiden—with her own lips—and who have refused her to her face? I know you men would half despise such a triumph; but believe me, we women know more of what is precious in love. There is nothing that should set a person higher in his own esteem; and we women would prize nothing more dearly."

"You are very good," he said; "but you cannot make me forget that I was asked in pity and not for love."

"I am not so sure of that," she replied, holding down her head. "Hear me to an end, Monsieur de Beaulieu. I know how you must despise me; I feel you are right to do so; I am too poor a creature to occupy one thought of your mind, although, alas! you must die for me this morning. But when I asked you to marry me, indeed, and indeed, it was because I respected and admired you, and loved you with my whole soul, from the very moment that you took my part against my uncle. If you had seen yourself, and how noble you looked, you would pity rather than despise me. And now," she went on, hurriedly checking him with her hand, "although I have laid aside all reserve and told you so much, remember that I know your sentiments toward me already. I would not, believe me, being nobly born, weary you with importunities into consent. I too have a pride of my own; and I declare before the holy mother of God, if you should now go back from your word already given, I would no more marry you than I would marry my uncle's groom."

Denis smiled a little bitterly.

"It is a small love," he said, "that shies at a little pride."

She made no answer, although she probably had her own thoughts.

"Come hither to the window," he said with a sigh. "Here is the dawn."

And indeed the dawn was already beginning. The hollow of the sky was full of essential daylight, colorless and clean; and the valley underneath was flooded with a gray reflection. A few thin vapors clung in the coves of the forest or lay along the winding course of the river. The scene disengaged a surprising effect of stillness, which was hardly interrupted when the cocks began once more to crow among the steadings. Perhaps the same fellow who had made so horrid a clangor in the darkness not half an hour before, now sent up the merriest cheer to greet the coming day. A little wind went bustling and eddying among the treetops underneath the windows. And still the daylight kept flooding insensibly out of the east, which was soon to grow incandescent and cast up that red-hot cannon-ball, the rising sun. Denis looked out over all this with a bit of a shiver. He had taken her hand, and retained it in his almost unconsciously.

"Has the day begun already?" she said; and then, illogically enough: "the night has been so long! Alas! what shall we say to my uncle when he returns?"

"What you will," said Denis, and he pressed her fingers in his.

She was silent.

"Blanche," he said, with a swift uncertain passionate utterance, "you have seen whether I fear death. You must know well enough that I would as gladly leap out of that window into the empty air as lay a finger on you without your free and full consent. But if you care for me at all do not let me lose my life in a misapprehension; for I love you better than the whole world; and though I will die for you blithely, it would be like all the joys of Paradise to live on and spend my life in your service."

As he stopped speaking, a bell began to ring loudly in the interior of the house; and a clatter of armor in the corridor showed that the retainers were returning to their post, and the two hours were at an end.

"After all that you have heard?" she whispered, leaning toward him with her lips and eyes.

"I have heard nothing," he replied.

"The captain's name was Florimond de Champdivers," she said in his ear.

"I did not hear it," he answered, taking her supple body in his arms and covering her wet face with kisses.

A melodious chirping was audible behind, followed by a beautiful chuckle, and the voice of Messire de Maletroit wished his new nephew a good-morning.

In the Fog

BY RICHARD HARDING DAVIS

(*1864-1916*)

I

The Grill is the club most difficult of access in the world. To be placed on its rolls distinguishes the new member as greatly as though he had received a vacant Garter or had been caricatured in "Vanity Fair."

Men who belong to the Grill Club never mention that fact. If you were to ask one of them which clubs he frequents, he will name all save that particular one. He is afraid if he told you he belonged to the Grill, that it would sound like boasting.

The Grill Club dates back to the days when Shakespeare's Theatre stood on the present site of the "Times" office. It has a golden Grill which Charles the Second presented to the Club, and the original manuscript of "Tom and Jerry in London," which was bequeathed to it by Pierce Egan himself. The members, when they write letters at the Club, still use sand to blot the ink.

The Grill enjoys the distinction of having blackballed, without political prejudice, a Prime Minister of each party. At the same sitting at which one of these fell, it elected, on account of his brogue and his bulls, Quiller, Q. C., who was then a penniless barrister.

When Paul Preval, the French artist who came to London by royal command to paint a portrait of the Prince of Wales, was made an honorary member—only foreigners may be honorary members—he said, as he signed his first wine card, "I would rather see my name on that, than on a picture in the Louvre."

At which Quiller remarked, "That is a devil of a compliment, because the only men who can read their names in the Louvre today have been dead fifty years."

On the night after the great fog of 1897 there were five members in the Club, four of them busy with supper and one reading in front of the fireplace. There is only one room to the Club, and one long table. At the far end of the room the fire of the grill glows red, and, when the fat falls, blazes into flame, and at the other there is a broad bow window of diamond panes, which looks down upon the street. The four men at the table were strangers to each other, but as they picked at the grilled bones, and sipped their Scotch and soda, they conversed with such charming animation that a visitor to the Club, which does not tolerate visitors, would have counted them as friends of long acquaintance, certainly not as Englishmen who had met for the first time, and without the form of an introduction. But it is the etiquette and tradition of the Grill, that whoever enters it must speak with whomever he finds there. It is to enforce this rule that there is but one long table, and whether there are twenty men at it or two, the waiters, supporting the rule, will place them side by side.

For this reason the four strangers at supper were seated together, with the candles grouped about them, and the long length of the table cutting a white path through the outer gloom.

"I repeat," said the gentleman with the black pearl stud, "that the days for romantic adventure and deeds of foolish daring have passed, and that the fault lies with ourselves. Voyages to the pole I do not catalogue as adventures. That African explorer, young Chetney, who turned up yesterday after he was supposed to have died in Uganda, did nothing adventurous. He made maps and explored the sources of rivers. He was in constant danger, but the presence of danger does not constitute adventure. Were that so, the chemist who studies high explosives, or who investigates deadly poisons, passes through adventures daily. No, 'adventures are for the adventurous.' But one no longer ventures. The spirit of it has died of inertia. We are grown too practical, too just, above all, too sensible. In this room, for instance, members of this Club have, at the sword's point, disputed the proper scanning of one of Pope's couplets. Over so weighty a matter as spilled Burgundy on a gentleman's cuff, ten men fought across this table, each with his rapier in one hand and a candle in the other. All ten were wounded. The question of the spilled Burgundy concerned but two of them. The eight others engaged because they were men of 'spirit.' They were, indeed, the first gentlemen of the day.

Tonight, were you to spill Burgundy on my cuff, were you even to insult me grossly, these gentlemen would not consider it incumbent upon them to kill each other. They would separate us, and tomorrow morning appear as witnesses against us at Bow Street. We have here tonight, in the persons of Sir Andrew and myself, an illustration of how the ways have changed."

The men around the table turned and glanced toward the gentleman in front of the fireplace. He was an elderly and somewhat portly person, with a kindly, wrinkled countenance, which wore continually a smile of almost childish confidence and good-nature. It was a face which the illustrated prints had made intimately familiar. He held a book from him at arm's-length, as if to adjust his eye-sight, and his brows were knit with interest.

"Now, were this the eighteenth century," continued the gentleman with the black pearl, "when Sir Andrew left the Club tonight I would have him bound and gagged and thrown into a sedan chair. The watch would not interfere, the passers-by would take to their heels, my hired bullies and ruffians would convey him to some lonely spot where we would guard him until morning. Nothing would come of it, except added reputation to myself as a gentleman of adventurous spirit, and possibly an essay in the 'Tatler,' with stars for names, entitled, let us say, 'The Budget and the Baronet.' "

"But to what end, sir?" inquired the youngest of the members. "And why Sir Andrew, of all persons—why should you select him for this adventure?"

The gentleman with the black pearl shrugged his shoulders.

"It would prevent him speaking in the House tonight. The Navy Increase Bill," he added gloomily. "It is a Government measure, and Sir Andrew speaks for it. And so great is his influence and so large his following that if he does"—the gentleman laughed ruefully—"if he does, it will go through. Now, had I the spirit of our ancestors," he exclaimed, "I would bring chloroform from the nearest chemist's and drug him in that chair. I would tumble his unconscious form into a hansom cab, and hold him prisoner until daylight. If I did, I would save the British taxpayer the cost of five more battleships, many millions of pounds."

The gentlemen again turned, and surveyed the baronet with fresh-

ened interest. The honorary member of the Grill, whose accent already had betrayed him as an American, laughed softly.

"To look at him now," he said, "one would not guess he was deeply concerned with the affairs of state."

The others nodded silently.

"He has not lifted his eyes from that book since we first entered," added the youngest member. "He surely cannot mean to speak to-night."

"Oh, yes, he will speak," muttered the one with the black pearl moodily. "During these last hours of the session the House sits late, but when the Navy bill comes up on its third reading he will be in his place—and he will pass it."

The fourth member, a stout and florid gentleman of a somewhat sporting appearance, in a short smoking-jacket and black tie, sighed enviously.

"Fancy one of us being as cool as that, if he knew he had to stand up within an hour and rattle off a speech in Parliament. I'd be in a devil of a funk myself. And yet he is as keen over that book he's reading as though he had nothing before him until bedtime."

"Yes, see how eager he is," whispered the youngest member. "He does not lift his eyes even now when he cuts the pages. It is probably an Admiralty Report, or some other weighty work of statistics which bears upon his speech."

The gentleman with the black pearl laughed morosely.

"The weighty work in which the eminent statesman is so deeply engrossed," he said, "is called 'The Great Rand Robbery.' It is a detective novel, for sale at all bookstalls."

The American raised his eyebrows in disbelief.

"'The Great Rand Robbery'?" he repeated incredulously. "What an odd taste!"

"It is not a taste, it is his vice," returned the gentleman with the pearl stud. "It is his one dissipation. He is noted for it. You, as a stranger, could hardly be expected to know of this idiosyncrasy. Mr. Gladstone sought relaxation in the Greek poets, Sir Andrew finds his in Gaboriau. Since I have been a member of Parliament I have never seen him in the library without a shilling shocker in his hands. He brings them even into the sacred precincts of the House, and from the Government benches reads them concealed inside his hat. Once

started on a tale of murder, robbery, and sudden death, nothing can tear him from it, not even the call of the division bell, nor of hunger, nor the prayers of the party Whip. He gave up his country house because when he journeyed to it in the train he would become so absorbed in his detective stories that he was invariably carried past his station." The member of Parliament twisted his pearl stud nervously, and bit at the edge of his mustache. "If it only were the first pages of 'The Rand Robbery' that he were reading," he murmured bitterly, "instead of the last! With such another book as that, I swear I could hold him here until morning. There would be no need of chloroform to keep him from the House."

The eyes of all were fastened upon Sir Andrew, and each saw with fascination that with his forefinger he was now separating the last two pages of the book. The member of Parliament struck the table softly with his open palm.

"I would give a hundred pounds," he whispered, "if I could place in his hands at this moment a new story of Sherlock Holmes—a thousand pounds," he added wildly—"five thousand pounds!"

The American observed the speaker sharply, as though the words bore to him some special application, and then at an idea which apparently had but just come to him, smiled in great embarrassment.

Sir Andrew ceased reading, but, as though still under the influence of the book, sat looking blankly into the open fire. For a brief space no one moved until the baronet withdrew his eyes and, with a sudden start of recollection, felt anxiously for his watch. He scanned its face eagerly, and scrambled to his feet.

The voice of the American instantly broke the silence in a high, nervous accent.

"And yet Sherlock Holmes himself," he cried, "could not decipher the mystery which tonight baffles the police of London."

At these unexpected words, which carried in them something of the tone of a challenge, the gentlemen about the table started as suddenly as though the American had fired a pistol in the air, and Sir Andrew halted abruptly and stood observing him with grave surprise.

The gentleman with the black pearl was the first to recover.

"Yes, yes," he said eagerly, throwing himself across the table. "A mystery that baffles the police of London. I have heard nothing of it. Tell us at once, pray do—tell us at once."

The American flushed uncomfortably, and picked uneasily at the tablecloth.

"No one but the police has heard of it," he murmured, "and they only through me. It is a remarkable crime, to which, unfortunately, I am the only person who can bear witness. Because I am the only witness, I am, in spite of my immunity as a diplomat, detained in London by the authorities of Scotland Yard. My name," he said, inclining his head politely, "is Sears, Lieutenant Ripley Sears of the United States Navy, at present Naval Attaché to the Court of Russia. Had I not been detained today by the police I would have started this morning for Petersburg."

The gentleman with the black pearl interrupted with so pronounced an exclamation of excitement and delight that the American stammered and ceased speaking.

"Do you hear, Sir Andrew?" cried the member of Parliament jubilantly. "An American diplomat halted by our police because he is the only witness of a most remarkable crime—*the* most remarkable crime, I believe you said, sir," he added, bending eagerly toward the naval officer, "which has occurred in London in many years."

The American moved his head in assent and glanced at the two other members. They were looking doubtfully at him, and the face of each showed that he was greatly perplexed.

Sir Andrew advanced to within the light of the candles and drew a chair toward him.

"The crime must be exceptional indeed," he said, "to justify the police in interfering with a representative of a friendly power. If I were not forced to leave at once, I should take the liberty of asking you to tell us the details."

The gentleman with the pearl pushed the chair toward Sir Andrew, and motioned him to be seated.

"You cannot leave us now," he exclaimed. "Mr. Sears is just about to tell us of this remarkable crime."

He nodded vigorously at the naval officer and the American, after first glancing doubtfully toward the servants at the far end of the room, leaned forward across the table. The others drew their chairs nearer and bent toward him. The baronet glanced irresolutely at his watch, and with an exclamation of annoyance snapped down the lid.

"They can wait," he muttered. He seated himself quickly and nodded at Lieutenant Sears.

"If you will be so kind as to begin, sir," he said impatiently.

"Of course," said the American, "you understand that I understand that I am speaking to gentlemen. The confidences of this Club are inviolate. Until the police give the facts to the public press, I must consider you my confederates. You have heard nothing, you know no one connected with this mystery. Even I must remain anonymous."

The gentlemen seated around him nodded gravely.

"Of course," the baronet assented with eagerness, "of course."

"We will refer to it," said the gentleman with the black pearl, "as 'The Story of the Naval Attaché.' "

"I arrived in London two days ago," said the American, "and I engaged a room at the Bath Hotel. I know very few people in London, and even the members of our embassy were strangers to me. But in Hong Kong I had become great pals with an officer in your navy, who has since retired, and who is now living in a small house in Rutland Gardens opposite the Knightsbridge barracks. I telegraphed him that I was in London, and yesterday morning I received a most hearty invitation to dine with him the same evening at his house. He is a bachelor, so we dined alone and talked over all our old days on the Asiatic Station, and of the changes which had come to us since we had last met there. As I was leaving the next morning for my post at Petersburg, and had many letters to write, I told him, about ten o'clock, that I must get back to the hotel, and he sent out his servant to call a hansom.

"For the next quarter of an hour, as we sat talking, we could hear the cab whistle sounding violently from the doorstep, but apparently with no result.

" 'It cannot be that the cabmen are on strike,' my friend said, as he rose and walked to the window.

"He pulled back the curtains and at once called to me.

" 'You have never seen a London fog, have you?' he asked. 'Well, come here. This is one of the best, or, rather, one of the worst, of them.' I joined him at the window, but I could see nothing. Had I not known that the house looked out upon the street I would have believed that I was facing a dead wall. I raised the sash and stretched out my head, but still I could see nothing. Even the light of the

street lamps opposite, and in the upper windows of the barracks, had been smothered in the yellow mist. The lights of the room in which I stood penetrated the fog only to the distance of a few inches from my eyes.

"Below me the servant was still sounding his whistle, but I could afford to wait no longer, and told my friend that I would try and find the way to my hotel on foot. He objected, but the letters I had to write were for the Navy Department, and, besides, I had always heard that to be out in a London fog was the most wonderful experience, and I was curious to investigate one for myself.

"My friend went with me to his front door, and laid down a course for me to follow. I was first to walk straight across the street to the brick wall of the Knightsbridge Barracks. I was then to feel my way along the wall until I came to a row of houses set back from the sidewalk. They would bring me to a cross street. On the other side of this street was a row of shops which I was to follow until they joined the iron railings of Hyde Park. I was to keep to the railings until I reached the gates at Hyde Park Corner, where I was to lay a diagonal course across Piccadilly, and tack in toward the railings of Green Park. At the end of these railings, going east, I would find the Walsingham, and my own hotel.

"To a sailor the course did not seem difficult, so I bade my friend good-night and walked forward until my feet touched the paving. I continued upon it until I reached the curbing of the sidewalk. A few steps further, and my hands struck the wall of the barracks. I turned in the direction from which I had just come, and saw a square of faint light cut in the yellow fog. I shouted, 'All right,' and the voice of my friend answered, 'Good luck to you.' The light from his open door disappeared with a bang, and I was left alone in a dripping, yellow darkness. I have been in the Navy for ten years, but I have never known such a fog as that of last night, not even among the icebergs of Behring Sea. There one at least could see the light of the binnacle, but last night I could not even distinguish the hand by which I guided myself along the barrack wall. At sea a fog is a natural phenomenon. It is as familiar as the rainbow which follows a storm, it is as proper that a fog should spread upon the waters as that steam shall rise from a kettle. But a fog which springs from the paved streets, that rolls between solid house-fronts, that forces cabs to move at half speed, that

drowns policemen and extinguishes the electric lights of the music hall, that to me is incomprehensible. It is as out of place as a tidal wave on Broadway.

"As I felt my way along the wall, I encountered other men who were coming from the opposite direction, and each time when we hailed each other I stepped away from the wall to make room for them to pass. But the third time I did this, when I reached out my hand, the wall had disappeared, and the further I moved to find it the further I seemed to be sinking into space. I had the unpleasant conviction that at any moment I might step over a precipice. Since I had set out I had heard no traffic in the street, and now, although I listened some minutes, I could only distinguish the occasional footfalls of pedestrians. Several times I called aloud, and once a jocular gentleman answered me, but only to ask me where I thought he was, and then even he was swallowed up in the silence. Just above me I could make out a jet of gas which I guessed came from a street lamp, and I moved over to that, and, while I tried to recover my bearings, kept my hand on the iron post. Except for this flicker of gas, no larger than the tip of my finger, I could distinguish nothing about me. For the rest, the mist hung between me and the world like a damp and heavy blanket.

"I could hear voices, but I could not tell from whence they came, and the scrape of a foot moving cautiously, or a muffled cry as someone stumbled, were the only sounds that reached me.

"I decided that until someone took me in tow I had best remain where I was, and it must have been for ten minutes that I waited by the lamp, straining my ears and hailing distant footfalls. In a house near me some people were dancing to the music of a Hungarian band. I even fancied I could hear the windows shake to the rhythm of their feet, but I could not make out from which part of the compass the sounds came. And sometimes, as the music rose, it seemed close at my hand, and again, to be floating high in the air above my head. Although I was surrounded by thousands of householders—13—I was as completely lost as though I had been set down by night in the Sahara Desert. There seemed to be no reason in waiting longer for an escort, so I again set out, and at once bumped against a low iron fence. At first I believed this to be an area railing, but on following it I found that it stretched for a long distance, and that it was pierced at regular intervals with gates. I was standing uncertainly with my

hand on one of these when a square of light suddenly opened in the night, and in it I saw, as you see a picture thrown by a biograph in a darkened theatre, a young gentleman in evening dress, and back of him the lights of a hall. I guessed from its elevation and distance from the sidewalk that this light must come from the door of a house set back from the street, and I determined to approach it and ask the young man to tell me where I was. But in fumbling with the lock of the gate I instinctively bent my head, and when I raised it again the door had partly closed, leaving only a narrow shaft of light. Whether the young man had re-entered the house, or had left it I could not tell, but I hastened to open the gate, and as I stepped forward I found myself upon an asphalt walk. At the same instant there was the sound of quick steps upon the path, and someone rushed past me. I called to him, but he made no reply, and I heard the gate click and the footsteps hurrying away upon the sidewalk.

"Under other circumstances the young man's rudeness, and his recklessness in dashing so hurriedly through the mist, would have struck me as peculiar, but everything was so distorted by the fog that at the moment I did not consider it. The door was still as he had left it, partly open. I went up the path, and, after much fumbling, found the knob of the door-bell and gave it a sharp pull. The bell answered me from a great depth and distance, but no movement followed from inside the house, and although I pulled the bell again and again I could hear nothing save the dripping of the mist about me. I was anxious to be on my way, but unless I knew where I was going there was little chance of my making any speed, and I was determined that until I learned my bearings I would not venture back into the fog. So I pushed the door open and stepped into the house.

"I found myself in a long and narrow hall, upon which doors opened from either side. At the end of the hall was a staircase with a balustrade which ended in a sweeping curve. The balustrade was covered with heavy Persian rugs, and the walls of the hall were also hung with them. The door on my left was closed, but the one nearer me on the right was open, and as I stepped opposite to it I saw that it was a sort of reception or waiting-room, and that it was empty. The door below it was also open, and with the idea that I would surely find someone there, I walked on up the hall. I was in evening dress, and I felt I did not look like a burglar, so I had no great fear that, should I en-

counter one of the inmates of the house, he would shoot me on sight. The second door in the hall opened into a dining-room. This was also empty. One person had been dining at the table, but the cloth had not been cleared away, and a flickering candle showed half-filled wine-glasses and the ashes of cigarettes. The greater part of the room was in complete darkness.

"By this time I had grown conscious of the fact that I was wandering about in a strange house, and that, apparently, I was alone in it. The silence of the place began to try my nerves, and in a sudden, unexplainable panic I started for the open street. But as I turned, I saw a man sitting on a bench, which the curve of the balustrade had hidden from me. His eyes were shut, and he was sleeping soundly.

"The moment before I had been bewildered because I could see no one, but at sight of this man I was much more bewildered.

"He was a very large man, a giant in height, with long yellow hair which hung below his shoulders. He was dressed in a red silk shirt that was belted at the waist and hung outside black velvet trousers which, in turn, were stuffed into high black boots. I recognized the costume at once as that of a Russian servant, but what a Russian servant in his native livery could be doing in a private house in Knightsbridge was incomprehensible.

"I advanced and touched the man on the shoulder, and after an effort he awoke, and, on seeing me, sprang to his feet and began bowing rapidly and making deprecatory gestures. I had picked up enough Russian in Petersburg to make out that the man was apologizing for having fallen asleep, and I also was able to explain to him that I desired to see his master.

"He nodded vigorously, and said, 'Will the Excellency come this way The Princess is here.'

"I distinctly made out the word 'princess,' and I was a good deal embarrassed. I had thought it would be easy enough to explain my intrusion to a man, but how a woman would look at it was another matter, and as I followed him down the hall I was somewhat puzzled.

"As we advanced, he noticed that the front door was standing open, and with an exclamation of surprise, hastened toward it and closed it. Then he rapped twice on the door of what was apparently the drawing-room. There was no reply to his knock, and he tapped again, and then timidly, and cringing subserviently, opened the door and stepped in-

side. He withdrew himself at once and stared stupidly at me, shaking his head.

" 'She is not there,' he said. He stood for a moment gazing blankly through the open door, and then hastened toward the dining-room. The solitary candle which still burned there seemed to assure him that the room also was empty. He came back and bowed me toward the drawing-room. 'She is above,' he said; 'I will inform the Princess of the Excellency's presence.'

"Before I could stop him he had turned and was running up the staircase, leaving me alone at the open door of the drawing-room. I decided that the adventure had gone quite far enough, and if I had been able to explain to the Russian that I had lost my way in the fog, and only wanted to get back into the street again, I would have left the house on the instant.

"Of course, when I first rang the bell of the house I had no other expectation than that it would be answered by a parlor-maid who would direct me on my way. I certainly could not then foresee that I would disturb a Russian princess in her boudoir, or that I might be thrown out by her athletic bodyguard. Still, I thought I ought not now to leave the house without making some apology, and, if the worst should come, I could show my card. They could hardly believe that a member of an Embassy had any designs upon the hat-rack.

"The room in which I stood was dimly lighted, but I could see that, like the hall, it was hung with heavy Persian rugs. The corners were filled with palms, and there was the unmistakable odor in the air of Russian cigarettes, and strange, dry scents that carried me back to the bazaars of Vladivostok. Near the front windows was a grand piano, and at the other end of the room a heavily carved screen of some black wood, picked out with ivory. The screen was overhung with a canopy of silken draperies, and formed a sort of alcove. In front of the alcove was spread the white skin of a polar bear, and set on that was one of those low Turkish coffee tables. It held a lighted spirit-lamp and two gold coffee cups. I had heard no movement from above stairs, and it must have been fully three minutes that I stood waiting, noting these details of the room and wondering at the delay, and at the strange silence.

"And then, suddenly, as my eye grew more used to the half-light, I saw, projecting from behind the screen as though it were stretched

along the back of a divan, the hand of a man and the lower part of his arm. I was as startled as though I had come across a footprint on a deserted island. Evidently the man had been sitting there since I had come into the room, ever since I had entered the house, and he had heard the servant knocking upon the door. Why he had not declared himself I could not understand, but I supposed that possibly he was a guest, with no reason to interest himself in the Princess's other visitors, or perhaps, for some reason, he did not wish to be observed. I could see nothing of him except his hand, but I had an unpleasant feeling that he had been peering at me through the carving in the screen, and that he still was doing so. I moved my feet noisily on the floor and said tentatively, 'I beg your pardon.'

"There was no reply, and the hand did not stir. Apparently the man was bent upon ignoring me, but as all I wished was to apologize for my intrusion and to leave the house, I walked up to the alcove and peered around it. Inside the screen was a divan piled with cushions, and on the end of it nearer me the man was sitting. He was a young Englishman with light yellow hair and a deeply bronzed face. He was seated with his arms stretched out along the back of the divan, and with his head resting against a cushion. His attitude was one of complete ease. But his mouth had fallen open, and his eyes were set with an expression of utter horror. At the first glance I saw that he was quite dead.

"For a flash of time I was too startled to act, but in the same flash I was convinced that the man had met his death from no accident, that he had not died through any ordinary failure of the laws of nature. The expression on his face was much too terrible to be misinterpreted. It spoke as eloquently as words. It told me that before the end had come he had watched his death approach and threaten him.

"I was so sure he had been murdered that I instinctively looked on the floor for the weapon, and, at the same moment, out of concern for my own safety, quickly behind me; but the silence of the house continued unbroken.

"I have seen a great number of dead men; I was on the Asiatic Station during the Japanese-Chinese war. I was in Port Arthur after the massacre. So a dead man, for the single reason that he is dead, does not repel me, and, though I knew that there was no hope that this man was alive, still for decency's sake, I felt his pulse, and while I

kept my ears alert for any sound from the floors above me, I pulled open his shirt and placed my hand upon his heart. My fingers instantly touched upon the opening of a wound, and as I withdrew them I found them wet with blood. He was in evening dress, and in the wide bosom of his shirt I found a narrow slit, so narrow that in the dim light it was scarcely discernible. The wound was no wider than the smallest blade of a pocket-knife, but when I stripped the shirt away from the chest and left it bare, I found that the weapon, narrow as it was, had been long enough to reach his heart. There is no need to tell you how I felt as I stood by the body of this boy, for he was hardly older than a boy, or of the thoughts that came into my head. I was bitterly sorry for this stranger, bitterly indignant at his murderer, and, at the same time, selfishly concerned for my own safety and for the notoriety which I saw was sure to follow. My instinct was to leave the body where it lay, and to hide myself in the fog, but I also felt that since a succession of accidents had made me the only witness to a crime, my duty was to make myself a good witness and to assist to establish the facts of this murder.

"That it might possibly be a suicide, and not a murder, did not disturb me for a moment. The fact that the weapon had disappeared, and the expression on the boy's face were enough to convince, at least me, that he had had no hand in his own death. I judged it, therefore, of the first importance to discover who was in the house, or, if they had escaped from it, who had been in the house before I entered it. I had seen one man leave it; but all I could tell of him was that he was a young man, that he was in evening dress, and that he had fled in such haste that he had not stopped to close the door behind him.

"The Russian servant I had found apparently asleep, and, unless he acted a part with supreme skill, he was a stupid and ignorant boor, and as innocent of the murder as myself. There was still the Russian princess whom he had expected to find, or had pretended to expect to find, in the same room with the murdered man. I judged that she must now be either upstairs with the servant, or that she had, without his knowledge, already fled from the house. When I recalled his apparently genuine surprise at not finding her in the drawing-room, this latter supposition seemed the more probable. Nevertheless, I decided that it was my duty to make a search, and after a second hurried look

for the weapon among the cushions of the divan, and upon the floor, I cautiously crossed the hall and entered the dining-room.

"The single candle was still flickering in the draught, and showed only the white cloth. The rest of the room was draped in shadows. I picked up the candle, and, lifting it high above my head, moved around the corner of the table. Either my nerves were on such a stretch that no shock could strain them further, or my mind was inoculated to horrors, for I did not cry out at what I saw nor retreat from it. Immediately at my feet was the body of a beautiful woman, lying at full length upon the floor, her arms flung out on either side of her, and her white face and shoulders gleaming dully in the unsteady light of the candle. Around her throat was a great chain of diamonds, and the light played upon these and made them flash and blaze in tiny flames. But the woman who wore them was dead, and I was so certain as to how she had died that without an instant's hesitation I dropped on my knees beside her and placed my hands above her heart. My fingers again touched the thin slit of a wound. I had no doubt in my mind but that this was the Russian princess, and when I lowered the candle to her face I was assured that this was so. Her features showed the finest lines of both the Slav and the Jewess; the eyes were black, the hair blue-black and wonderfully heavy, and her skin, even in death, was rich in color. She was a surpassingly beautiful woman.

"I rose and tried to light another candle with the one I held, but I found that my hand was so unsteady that I could not keep the wicks together. It was my intention to again search for this strange dagger which had been used to kill both the English boy and the beautiful princess, but before I could light the second candle I heard footsteps descending the stairs, and the Russian servant appeared in the doorway.

My face was in darkness, or I am sure that at the sight of it he would have taken alarm, for at that moment I was not sure but that this man himself was the murderer. His own face was plainly visible to me in the light from the hall, and I could see that it wore an expression of dull bewilderment. I stepped quickly toward him and took a firm hold upon his wrist.

" 'She is not there,' he said. 'The Princess has gone. They have all gone.'

" 'Who have gone?' I demanded. 'Who else has been here?'

" 'The two Englishmen,' he said.

" 'What two Englishmen?' I demanded. 'What are their names?'

"The man now saw by my manner that some question of great moment hung upon his answer, and he began to protest that he did not know the names of the visitors and that until that evening he had never seen them.

"I guessed that it was my tone which frightened him, so I took my hand off his wrist and spoke less eagerly.

" 'How long have they been here?' I asked, 'and when did they go?'

"He pointed behind him toward the drawing-room.

" 'One sat there with the Princess,' he said; 'the other came after I had placed the coffee in the drawing-room. The two Englishmen talked together and the Princess returned here to the table. She sat there in that chair, and I brought her cognac and cigarettes. Then I sat outside upon the bench. It was a feast day, and I had been drinking. Pardon, Excellency, but I fell asleep. When I woke, your Excellency was standing by me, but the Princess and the two Englishmen had gone. That is all I know.'

"I believed that the man was telling me the truth. His fright had passed, and he was now apparently puzzled, but not alarmed.

" 'You must remember the names of the Englishmen,' I urged. 'Try to think. When you announced them to the Princess what name did you give?'

"At this question he exclaimed with pleasure, and, beckoning to me, ran hurriedly down the hall and into the drawing-room. In the corner furthest from the screen was the piano, and on it was a silver tray. He picked this up and, smiling with pride at his own intelligence, pointed at two cards that lay upon it. I took them up and read the names engraved upon them."

The American paused abruptly, and glanced at the faces about him. "I read the names," he repeated. He spoke with great reluctance.

"Continue!" cried the Baronet, sharply.

"I read the names," said the American with evident distaste, "and the family name of each was the same. They were the names of two brothers. One is well known to you. It is that of the African explorer of whom this gentleman was just speaking. I mean the Earl of Chetney. The other was the name of his brother, Lord Arthur Chetney."

The men at the table fell back as though a trapdoor had fallen open at their feet.

"Lord Chetney?" they exclaimed in chorus. They glanced at each other and back to the American with every expression of concern and disbelief.

"It is impossible!" cried the Baronet. "Why, my dear sir, young Chetney only arrived from Africa yesterday. It was so stated in the evening papers."

The jaw of the American set in a resolute square, and he pressed his lips together.

"You are perfectly right, sir," he said. "Lord Chetney did arrive in London yesterday morning, and yesterday night I found his dead body."

The youngest member present was the first to recover. He seemed much less concerned over the identity of the murdered man than at the interruption of the narrative.

"Oh, please let him go on!" he cried. "What happened then? You say you found two visiting cards. How do you know which card was that of the murdered man?"

The American, before he answered, waited until the chorus of exclamations had ceased. Then he continued as though he had not been interrupted.

"The instant I read the names upon the cards," he said, "I ran to the screen and, kneeling beside the dead man, began a search through his pockets. My hand at once fell upon a card-case, and I found on all the cards it contained the title of the Earl of Chetney. His watch and cigarette-case also bore his name. These evidences, and the fact of his bronzed skin, and that his cheek-bones were worn with fever convinced me that the dead man was the African explorer, and the boy who had fled past me in the night was Arthur, his younger brother.

"I was so intent upon my search that I had forgotten the servant and I was still on my knees when I heard a cry behind me. I turned and saw the man gazing down at the body in abject horror.

"Before I could rise, he gave another cry of terror, and, flinging himself into the hall, raced toward the door to the street. I leaped after him, shouting to him to halt, but before I could reach the hall he had torn open the door, and I saw him spring out into the yellow fog. I cleared the steps in a jump and ran down the garden walk but just a

the gate clicked in front of me. I had it open on the instant, and, following the sound of the man's footsteps, I raced after him across the open street. He, also, could hear me, and he instantly stopped running, and there was absolute silence. He was so near that I almost fancied I could hear him panting, and I held my own breath to listen. But I could distinguish nothing but the dripping of the mist about us, and from far off the music of the Hungarian band, which I had heard when I first lost myself.

"All I could see was the square of light from the door I had left open behind me, and a lamp in the hall beyond it flickering in the draught. But even as I watched it, the flame of the lamp was blown violently to and fro, and the door, caught in the same current of air, closed slowly. I knew if it shut I could not again enter the house, and I rushed madly toward it. I believe I even shouted out, as though it were something human which I could compel to obey me, and then I caught my foot against the curb and smashed into the sidewalk. When I rose to my feet I was dizzy and half stunned, and though I thought then that I was moving toward the door, I know now that I probably turned directly from it; for, as I groped about in the night, calling frantically for the police, my fingers touched nothing but the dripping fog, and the iron railings for which I sought seemed to have melted away. For many minutes I beat the mist with my arms like one at blind man's buff, turning sharply in circles, cursing aloud at my stupidity and crying continually for help. At last a voice answered me from the fog, and I found myself held in the circle of a policeman's lantern.

"That is the end of my adventure. What I have to tell you now is what I learned from the police.

"At the station-house to which the man guided me I related what you have just heard. I told them that the house they must at once find was one set back from the street within a radius of two hundred yards from the Knightsbridge Barracks, that within fifty yards of it someone was giving a dance to the music of a Hungarian band, and that the railings before it were as high as a man's waist and filed to a point. With that to work upon, twenty men were at once ordered out into the fog to search for the house, and Inspector Lyle himself was despatched to the home of Lord Edam, Chetney's father, with a warrant

for Lord Arthur's arrest. I was thanked and dismissed on my own recognizance.

"This morning, Inspector Lyle called on me, and from him I learned the police theory of the scene I have just described.

"Apparently I had wandered very far in the fog, for up to noon today the house had not been found, nor had they been able to arrest Lord Arthur. He did not return to his father's house last night, and there is no trace of him; but from what the police knew of the past lives of the people I found in that lost house, they have evolved a theory, and their theory is that the murders were committed by Lord Arthur.

"The infatuation of his elder brother, Lord Chetney, for a Russian princess, so Inspector Lyle tells me, is well known to everyone. About two years ago the Princess Zichy, as she calls herself, and he were constantly together, and Chetney informed his friends that they were about to be married. The woman was notorious in two continents, and when Lord Edam heard of his son's infatuation he appealed to the police for her record.

"It is through his having applied to them that they know so much concerning her and her relations with the Chetneys. From the police Lord Edam learned that Madame Zichy had once been a spy in the employ of the Russian Third Section, but that lately she had been repudiated by her own government and was living by her wits, by blackmail, and by her beauty. Lord Edam laid this record before his son, but Chetney either knew it already or the woman persuaded him not to believe in it, and the father and son parted in great anger. Two days later the marquis altered his will, leaving all of his money to the younger brother, Arthur.

"The title and some of the landed property he could not keep from Chetney, but he swore if his son saw the woman again that the will should stand as it was, and he would be left without a penny.

"This was about eighteen months ago, when apparently Chetney tired of the Princess, and suddenly went off to shoot and explore in Central Africa. No word came from him, except that twice he was reported as having died of fever in the jungle, and finally two traders reached the coast who said they had seen his body. This was accepted by all as conclusive, and young Arthur was recognized as the heir to the Edam millions. On the strength of this supposition he at once

began to borrow enormous sums from the money lenders. This is of great importance, as the police believe it was these debts which drove him to the murder of his brother. Yesterday, as you know, Lord Chetney suddenly returned from the grave, and it was the fact that for two years he had been considered as dead which lent such importance to his return and which gave rise to those columns of detail concerning him which appeared in all the afternoon papers. But, obviously, during his absence he had not tired of the Princess Zichy, for we know that a few hours after he reached London he sought her out. His brother, who had also learned of his reappearance through the papers, probably suspected which would be the house he would first visit, and followed him there, arriving, so the Russian servant tells us, while the two were at coffee in the drawing-room. The Princess, then, we also learn from the servant, withdrew to the dining-room, leaving the brothers together. What happened one can only guess.

"Lord Arthur knew now that when it was discovered he was no longer the heir, the money-lenders would come down upon him. The police believe that he at once sought out his brother to beg for money to cover the postobits, but that, considering the sum he needed was several hundreds of thousands of pounds, Chetney refused to give it him. No one knew that Arthur had gone to seek out his brother. They were alone. It is possible, then, that in a passion of disappointment, and crazed with the disgrace which he saw before him, young Arthur made himself the heir beyond further question. The death of his brother would have availed nothing if the woman remained alive. It is then possible that he crossed the hall, and with the same weapon which made him Lord Edam's heir destroyed the solitary witness to the murder. The only other person who could have seen it was sleeping in a drunken stupor, to which fact undoubtedly he owed his life. And yet," concluded the Naval Attaché, leaning forward and marking each word with his finger, "Lord Arthur blundered fatally. In his haste he left the door of the house open, so giving access to the first passer-by, and he forgot that when he entered it he had handed his card to the servant. That piece of paper may yet send him to the gallows. In the meantime he has disappeared completely, and somewhere, in one of the millions of streets of this great capital, in a locked and empty house, lies the body of his brother, and of the woman his brother loved, undiscovered, unburied, and with their murder unavenged."

In the discussion which followed the conclusion of the story of the Naval Attaché the gentleman with the pearl took no part. Instead, he arose, and, beckoning a servant to a far corner of the room, whispered earnestly to him until a sudden movement on the part of Sir Andrew caused him to return hurriedly to the table.

"There are several points in Mr. Sears's story I want explained," he cried. "Be seated, Sir Andrew," he begged. "Let us have the opinion of an expert. I do not care what the police think, I want to know what you think."

But Sir Andrew rose reluctantly from his chair.

"I should like nothing better than to discuss this," he said. "But it is most important that I proceed to the House. I should have been there some time ago." He turned toward the servant and directed him to call a hansom.

The gentleman with the pearl stud looked appealingly at the Naval Attaché. "There are surely many details that you have not told us," he urged. "Some you have forgotten."

The Baronet interrupted quickly.

"I trust not," he said, "for I could not possibly stop to hear them."

"The story is finished," declared the Naval Attaché; "until Lord Arthur is arrested or the bodies are found there is nothing more to tell of either Chetney or the Princess Zichy."

"Of Lord Chetney perhaps not," interrupted the sporting-looking gentleman with the black tie, "but there'll always be something to tell of the Princess Zichy. I know enough stories about her to fill a book. She was a most remarkable woman." The speaker dropped the end of his cigar into his coffee cup and, taking his case from his pocket, selected a fresh one. As he did so he laughed and held up the case that the others might see it. It was an ordinary cigar-case of well-worn pig-skin, with a silver clasp.

"The only time I ever met her," he said, "she tried to rob me of this."

The Baronet regarded him closely.

"She tried to rob you?" he repeated.

"Tried to rob me of this," continued the gentleman in the black tie, "and of the Czarina's diamonds." His tone was one of mingled admiration and injury.

"The Czarina's diamonds!" exclaimed the Baronet. He glanced quickly and suspiciously at the speaker, and then at the others about the table. But their faces gave evidence of no other emotion than that of ordinary interest.

"Yes, the Czarina's diamonds," repeated the man with the black tie. "It was a necklace of diamonds. I was told to take them to the Russian Ambassador in Paris who was to deliver them at Moscow. I am a Queen's Messenger," he added.

"Oh, I see," exclaimed Sir Andrew in a tone of relief. "And you say that this same Princess Zichy, one of the victims of this double murder, endeavored to rob you of—of—that cigar-case."

"And the Czarina's diamonds," answered the Queen's Messenger imperturbably. "It's not much of a story, but it gives you an idea of the woman's character. The robbery took place between Paris and Marseilles."

The Baronet interrupted him with an abrupt movement. "No, no," he cried, shaking his head in protest. "Do not tempt me. I really cannot listen. I must be at the House in ten minutes."

"I am sorry," said the Queen's Messenger. He turned to those seated about him. "I wonder if the other gentlemen—" he inquired tentatively. There was a chorus of polite murmurs, and the Queen's Messenger, bowing his head in acknowledgment, took a preparatory sip from his glass. At the same moment the servant to whom the man with the black pearl had spoken, slipped a piece of paper into his hand. He glanced at it, frowned, and threw it under the table.

The servant bowed to the Baronet.

"Your hansom is waiting, Sir Andrew," he said.

"The necklace was worth twenty thousand pounds," began the Queen's Messenger. "It was a present from the Queen of England to celebrate—" The Baronet gave an exclamation of angry annoyance.

"Upon my word, this is most provoking," he interrupted. "I really ought not to stay. But I certainly mean to hear this." He turned irritably to the servant. "Tell the hansom to wait," he commanded, and, with an air of a boy who is playing truant, slipped guiltily into his chair.

The gentleman with the black pearl smiled blandly, and rapped upon the table.

"Order, gentlemen," he said. "Order for the story of the Queen's Messenger and the Czarina's diamonds."

II

"The necklace was a present from the Queen of England to the Czarina of Russia," began the Queen's Messenger. "It was to celebrate the occasion of the Czar's coronation. Our Foreign Office knew that the Russian Ambassador in Paris was to proceed to Moscow for that ceremony, and I was directed to go to Paris and turn over the necklace to him. But when I reached Paris I found he had not expected me for a week later and was taking a few days' vacation at Nice. His people asked me to leave the necklace with them at the Embassy, but I had been charged to get a receipt for it from the Ambassador himself, so I started at once for Nice. The fact that Monte Carlo is not two thousand miles from Nice may have had something to do with making me carry out my instructions so carefully.

"Now, how the Princess Zichy came to find out about the necklace I don't know, but I can guess. As you have just heard, she was at one time a spy in the service of the Russian government. And after they dismissed her she kept up her acquaintance with many of the Russian agents in London. It is probable that through one of them she learned that the necklace was to be sent to Moscow, and which one of the Queen's Messengers had been detailed to take it there. Still, I doubt if even that knowledge would have helped her if she had not also known something which I supposed no one else in the world knew but myself and one other man. And, curiously enough, the other man was a Queen's Messenger too, and a friend of mine. You must know that up to the time of this robbery I had always concealed my despatches in a manner peculiarly my own. I got the idea from that play called 'A Scrap of Paper.' In it a man wants to hide a certain compromising document. He knows that all his rooms will be secretly searched for it, so he puts it in a torn envelope and sticks it up where anyone can see it on his mantel shelf. The result is that the woman who is ransacking the house to find it looks in all the unlikely places, but passes over the scrap of paper that is just under her nose. Sometimes the papers and packages they give us to carry about Europe are of very great value, and sometimes they are special makes of cigarettes, and orders

to court dressmakers. Sometimes we know what we are carrying and sometimes we do not. If it is a large sum of money or a treaty, they generally tell us. But, as a rule, we have no knowledge of what the package contains; so, to be on the safe side, we naturally take just as great care of it as though we knew it held the terms of an ultimatum or the crown jewels. As a rule, my confrères carry the official packages in a despatch-box, which is just as obvious as a lady's jewel bag in the hands of her maid. Everyone knows they are carrying something of value. They put a premium on dishonesty. Well, after I saw the 'Scrap of Paper' play, I determined to put the government valuables in the most unlikely place that anyone would look for them. So I used to hide the documents they gave me inside my riding-boots, and small articles, such as money or jewels, I carried in an old cigar-case. After I took to using my case for that purpose I bought a new one, exactly like it, for my cigars. But to avoid mistakes, I had my initials placed on both sides of the new one, and the moment I touched the case, even in the dark, I could tell which it was by the raised initials.

"No one knew of this except the Queen's Messenger of whom I spoke. We once left Paris together on the Orient Express. I was going to Constantinople and he was to stop off at Vienna. On the journey I told him of my peculiar way of hiding things and showed him my cigar-case. If I recollect rightly, on that trip it held the grand cross of St. Michael and St. George, which the Queen was sending to our Ambassador. The Messenger was very much entertained at my scheme, and some months later when he met the Princess he told her about it as an amusing story. Of course, he had no idea she was a Russian spy. He didn't know anything at all about her, except that she was a very attractive woman. It was indiscreet, but he could not possibly have guessed that she could ever make any use of what he told her.

"Later, after the robbery, I remembered that I had informed this young chap of my secret hiding-place, and when I saw him again I questioned him about it. He was greatly distressed, and said he had never seen the importance of the secret. He remembered he had told several people of it, and among others the Princess Zichy. In that way I found out that it was she who had robbed me, and I know that from the moment I left London she was following me and that she knew then that the diamonds were concealed in my cigar-case.

"My train for Nice left Paris at ten in the morning. When I travel at night I generally tell the *chef de gare* that I am a Queen's Messenger, and he gives me a compartment to myself, but in the daytime I take whatever offers. On this morning I had found an empty compartment, and I had tipped the guard to keep everyone else out, not from any fear of losing the diamonds, but because I wanted to smoke. He had locked the door, and as the last bell had rung I supposed I was to travel alone, so I began to arrange my traps and make myself comfortable. The diamonds in the cigar-case were in the inside pocket of my waistcoat, and as they made a bulky package, I took them out, intending to put them in my hand bag. It is a small satchel like a bookmaker's, or those hand bags that couriers carry. I wear it slung from a strap across my shoulder, and, no matter whether I am sitting or walking, it never leaves me.

"I took the cigar-case which held the necklace from my inside pocket and the case which held the cigars out of the satchel, and while I was searching through it for a box of matches I laid the two cases beside me on the seat.

"At that moment the train started, but at the same instant there was a rattle at the lock of the compartment, and a couple of porters lifted and shoved a woman through the door, and hurled her rugs and umbrellas in after her.

"Instinctively I reached for the diamonds. I shoved them quickly into the satchel, and, pushing them far down to the bottom of the bag, snapped the spring lock. Then I put the cigars in the pocket of my coat, but with the thought that now that I had a woman as a travelling companion I would probably not be allowed to enjoy them.

"One of her pieces of luggage had fallen at my feet, and a roll of rugs had landed at my side. I thought if I hid the fact that the lady was not welcome, and at once endeavored to be civil, she might permit me to smoke. So I picked her hand bag off the floor and asked her where I might place it.

"As I spoke I looked at her for the first time, and saw that she was a most remarkably handsome woman.

"She smiled charmingly and begged me not to disturb myself. Then she arranged her own things about her, and, opening her dressing-bag, took out a gold cigarette-case.

" 'Do you object to smoke?' she asked.

"I laughed and assured her I had been in great terror lest she might object to it herself.

" 'If you like cigarettes,' she said, 'will you try some of these? They are rolled especially for my husband in Russia, and they are supposed to be very good.'

"I thanked her, and took one from her case, and I found it so much better than my own that I continued to smoke her cigarettes throughout the rest of the journey. I must say that we got on very well. I judged from the coronet on her cigarette-case, and from her manner, which was quite as well bred as that of any woman I ever met, that she was some one of importance, and though she seemed almost too good looking to be respectable, I determined that she was some *grande dame* who was so assured of her position that she could afford to be unconventional. At first she read her novel, and then she made some comment on the scenery, and finally we began to discuss the current politics of the Continent. She talked of all the cities in Europe, and seemed to know everyone worth knowing. But she volunteered nothing about herself except that she frequently made use of the expression, 'When my husband was stationed at Vienna,' or 'When my husband was promoted to Rome.' Once she said to me, 'I have often seen you at Monte Carlo. I saw you when you won the pigeon championship.' I told her that I was not a pigeon shot, and she gave a little start of surprise. 'Oh, I beg your pardon,' she said; 'I thought you were Morton Hamilton, the English champion.' As a matter of fact, I do look like Hamilton, but I know now that her object was to make me think that she had no idea as to who I really was. She needn't have acted at all, for I certainly had no suspicions of her, and was only too pleased to have so charming a companion.

"The one thing that should have made me suspicious was the fact that at every station she made some trivial excuse to get me out of the compartment. She pretended that her maid was travelling back of us in one of the second-class carriages, and kept saying she could not imagine why the woman did not come to look after her, and if the maid did not turn up at the next stop, would I be so very kind as to get out and bring her whatever it was she pretended she wanted.

"I had taken my dressing-case from the rack to get out a novel, and had left it on the seat opposite to mine, and at the end of the compartment farthest from her. And once when I came back from buying

her a cup of chocolate, or from some other fool errand, I found her standing at my end of the compartment with both hands on the dressing-bag. She looked at me without so much as winking an eye, and shoved the case carefully into a corner. 'Your bag slipped off on the floor,' she said. 'If you've got any bottles in it, you had better look and see that they're not broken.'

"And I give you my word, I was such an ass that I did open the case and looked all through it. She must have thought I *was* a Juggins. I get hot all over whenever I remember it. But in spite of my dulness, and her cleverness, she couldn't gain anything by sending me away, because what she wanted was in the hand bag and every time she sent me away the hand bag went with me.

"After the incident of the dressing-case her manner changed. Either in my absence she had had time to look through it, or, when I was examining it for broken bottles, she had seen everything it held.

"From that moment she must have been certain that the cigar-case, in which she knew I carried the diamonds, was in the bag that was fastened to my body, and from that time on she probably was plotting how to get it from me.

"Her anxiety became most apparent. She dropped the great lady manner, and her charming condescension went with it. She ceased talking, and, when I spoke, answered me irritably, or at random. No doubt her mind was entirely occupied with her plan. The end of our journey was drawing rapidly nearer, and her time for action was being cut down with the speed of the express train. Even I, unsuspicious as I was, noticed that something was very wrong with her. I really believe that before we reached Marseilles if I had not, through my own stupidity, given her the chance she wanted, she might have stuck a knife in me and rolled me out on the rails. But as it was, I only thought that the long journey had tired her. I suggested that it was a very trying trip, and asked her if she would allow me to offer her some of my cognac.

"She thanked me and said, 'No,' and then suddenly her eyes lighted, and she exclaimed, 'Yes, thank you, if you will be so kind.'

"My flask was in the hand bag, and I placed it on my lap and with my thumb slipped back the catch. As I keep my tickets and railroad guide in the bag, I am so constantly opening it that I never bother to lock it, and the fact that it is strapped to me has always been sufficient

protection. But I can appreciate now what a satisfaction, and what a torment too, it must have been to that woman when she saw that the bag opened without a key.

"While we were crossing the mountains I had felt rather chilly and had been wearing a light racing coat. But after the lamps were lighted the compartment became very hot and stuffy, and I found the coat uncomfortable. So I stood up, and, after first slipping the strap of the bag over my head, I placed the bag in the seat next me and pulled off the racing coat. I don't blame myself for being careless; the bag was still within reach of my hand, and nothing would have happened if at that exact moment the train had not stopped at Arles. It was the combination of my removing the bag and our entering the station at the same instant which gave the Princess Zichy the chance she wanted to rob me.

"I needn't say that she was clever enough to take it. The train ran into the station at full speed and came to a sudden stop. I had just thrown my coat into the rack, and had reached out my hand for the bag. In another instant I would have had the strap around my shoulder. But at that moment the Princess threw open the door of the compartment and beckoned wildly at the people on the platform. 'Natalie!' she called, 'Natalie! here I am. Come here! This way!' She turned upon me in the greatest excitement. 'My maid!' she cried. 'She is looking for me. She passed the window without seeing me. Go, please, and bring her back.' She continued pointing out of the door and beckoning me with her other hand. There certainly was something about that woman's tone which made one jump. When she was giving orders you had no chance to think of anything else. So I rushed out on my errand of mercy, and then rushed back again to ask what the maid looked like.

" 'In black,' she answered, rising and blocking the door of the compartment. 'All in black, with a bonnet!'

"The train waited three minutes at Arles, and in that time I suppose I must have rushed up to over twenty women and asked, 'Are you Natalie?' The only reason I wasn't punched with an umbrella or handed over to the police was that they probably thought I was crazy.

"When I jumped back into the compartment the Princess was seated where I had left her, but her eyes were burning with happiness. She

placed her hand on my arm almost affectionately, and said in a hysterical way, 'You are very kind to me. I am so sorry to have troubled you.'

"I protested that every woman on the platform was dressed in black.

" 'Indeed I am so sorry,' she said, laughing; and she continued to laugh until she began to breathe so quickly that I thought she was going to faint.

"I can see now that the last part of that journey must have been a terrible half hour for her. She had the cigar-case safe enough, but she knew that she herself was not safe. She understood if I were to open my bag, even at the last minute, and miss the case, I would know positively that she had taken it. I had placed the diamonds in the bag at the very moment she entered the compartment, and no one but our two selves had occupied it since. She knew that when we reached Marseilles she would either be twenty thousand pounds richer than when she left Paris, or that she would go to jail. That was the situation as she must have read it, and I don't envy her her state of mind during that last half hour. It must have been hell.

"I saw that something was wrong, and in my innocence I even wondered if possibly my cognac had not been a little too strong. For she suddenly developed into a most brilliant conversationalist, and applauded and laughed at everything I said, and fired off questions at me like a machine gun, so that I had no time to think of anything but of what she was saying. Whenever I stirred she stopped her chattering and leaned toward me, and watched me like a cat over a mouse-hole. I wondered how I could have considered her an agreeable travelling companion. I thought I would have preferred to be locked in with a lunatic. I don't like to think how she would have acted if I had made a move to examine the bag, but as I had it safely strapped around me again, I did not open it, and I reached Marseilles alive. As we drew into the station she shook hands with me and grinned at me like a Cheshire cat.

" 'I cannot tell you,' she said, 'how much I have to thank you for.' What do you think of that for impudence?

"I offered to put her in a carriage, but she said she must find Natalie, and that she hoped we would meet again at the hotel. So I drove off by myself, wondering who she was, and whether Natalie was not her keeper.

"I had to wait several hours for the train to Nice, and as I wanted to stroll around the city I thought I had better put the diamonds in the safe of the hotel. As soon as I reached my room I locked the door, placed the hand bag on the table and opened it. I felt among the things at the top of it, but failed to touch the cigar-case. I shoved my hand in deeper, and stirred the things about, but still I did not reach it. A cold wave swept down my spine, and a sort of emptiness came to the pit of my stomach. Then I turned red-hot, and the sweat sprung out all over me. I wet my lips with my tongue, and said to myself, 'Don't be an ass. Pull yourself together, pull yourself together. Take the things out, one at a time. It's there, of course it's there. Don't be an ass.'

"So I put a brake on my nerves and began very carefully to pick out the things one by one, but after another second I could not stand it, and I rushed across the room and threw out everything on the bed. But the diamonds were not among them. I pulled the things about and tore them open and shuffled and rearranged and sorted them, but it was no use. The cigar-case was gone. I threw everything in the dressing-case out on the floor, although I knew it was useless to look for it there. I knew that I had put it in the bag. I sat down and tried to think. I remembered I had put it in the satchel at Paris just as that woman had entered the compartment, and I had been alone with her ever since, so it was she who had robbed me. But how? It had never left my shoulder. And then I remembered that it had—that I had taken it off when I had changed my coat and for the few moments that I was searching for Natalie. I remembered that the woman had sent me on that goose chase, and that at every other station she had tried to get rid of me on some fool errand.

"I gave a roar like a mad bull, and I jumped down the stairs six steps at a time.

"I demanded at the office if a distinguished lady of title, possibly a Russian, had just entered the hotel.

"As I expected, she had not. I sprang into a cab and inquired at two other hotels, and then I saw the folly of trying to catch her without outside help, and I ordered the fellow to gallop to the office of the Chief of Police. I told my story, and the ass in charge asked me to calm myself, and wanted to take notes. I told him this was no time for taking notes, but for doing something. He got wrathy at that, and

I demanded to be taken at once to his Chief. The Chief, he said, was very busy, and could not see me. So I showed him my silver greyhound. In eleven years I had never used it but once before. I stated in pretty vigorous language that I was a Queen's Messenger, and that if the Chief of Police did not see me instantly he would lose his official head. At that the fellow jumped off his high horse and ran with me to his Chief,—a smart young chap, a colonel in the army, and a very intelligent man.

"I explained that I had been robbed in a French railway carriage of a diamond necklace belonging to the Queen of England, which her Majesty was sending as a present to the Czarina of Russia. I pointed out to him that if he succeeded in capturing the thief he would be made for life, and would receive the gratitude of three great powers.

"He wasn't the sort that thinks second thoughts are best. He saw Russian and French decorations sprouting all over his chest, and he hit a bell, and pressed buttons, and yelled out orders like the captain of a penny steamer in a fog. He sent her description to all the city gates, and ordered all cabmen and railway porters to search all trains leaving Marseilles. He ordered all passengers on outgoing vessels to be examined, and telegraphed the proprietors of every hotel and pension to send him a complete list of their guests within the hour. While I was standing there he must have given at least a hundred orders, and sent out enough commissaires, sergeants de ville, gendarmes, bicycle police, and plainclothes Johnnies to have captured the entire German army. When they had gone he assured me that the woman was as good as arrested already. Indeed, officially, she was arrested; for she had no more chance of escape from Marseilles than from the Château D'If.

"He told me to return to my hotel and possess my soul in peace. Within an hour he assured me he would acquaint me with her arrest.

"I thanked him, and complimented him on his energy, and left him. But I didn't share in his confidence. I felt that she was a very clever woman, and a match for any and all of us. It was all very well for him to be jubilant. He had not lost the diamonds, and had everything to gain if he found them; while I, even if he did recover the necklace, would only be where I was before I lost them, and if he did not recover it I was a ruined man. It was an awful facer for me. I had always prided myself on my record. In eleven years I had never mis-

laid an envelope, nor missed taking the first train. And now I had failed in the most important mission that had ever been intrusted to me. And it wasn't a thing that could be hushed up, either. It was too conspicuous, too spectacular. It was sure to invite the widest notoriety. I saw myself ridiculed all over the Continent, and perhaps dismissed, even suspected of having taken the thing myself.

"I was walking in front of a lighted café, and I felt so sick and miserable that I stopped for a pick-me-up. Then I considered that if I took one drink I would probably, in my present state of mind, not want to stop under twenty, and I decided I had better leave it alone. But my nerves were jumping like a frightened rabbit, and I felt I must have something to quiet them, or I would go crazy. I reached for my cigarette-case, but a cigarette seemed hardly adequate, so I put it back again and took out this cigar-case, in which I keep only the strongest and blackest cigars. I opened it and stuck in my fingers, but instead of a cigar they touched on a thin leather envelope. My heart stood perfectly still. I did not dare to look, but I dug my finger nails into the leather and I felt layers of thin paper, then a layer of cotton, and then they scratched on the facets of the Czarina's diamonds!

"I stumbled as though I had been hit in the face, and fell back into one of the chairs on the sidewalk. I tore off the wrappings and spread out the diamonds on the café table; I could not believe they were real. I twisted the necklace between my fingers and crushed it between my palms and tossed it up in the air. I believe I almost kissed it. The women in the café stood up on the chairs to see better, and laughed and screamed, and the people crowded so close around me that the waiters had to form a bodyguard. The proprietor thought there was a fight, and called for the police. I was so happy I didn't care. I laughed, too, and gave the proprietor a five-pound note, and told him to stand everyone a drink. Then I tumbled into a fiacre and galloped off to my friend the Chief of Police. I felt very sorry for him. He had been so happy at the chance I gave him, and he was sure to be disappointed when he learned I had sent him off on a false alarm.

"But now that I had found the necklace, I did not want him to find the woman. Indeed, I was most anxious that she should get clear away, for if she were caught the truth would come out, and I was likely to get a sharp reprimand, and sure to be laughed at.

"I could see now how it had happened. In my haste to hide the

diamonds when the woman was hustled into the carriage, I had shoved the cigars into the satchel, and the diamonds into the pocket of my coat. Now that I had the diamonds safe again, it seemed a very natural mistake. But I doubted if the Foreign Office would think so. I was afraid it might not appreciate the beautiful simplicity of my secret hiding-place. So, when I reached the police station, and found that the woman was still at large, I was more than relieved.

"As I expected, the Chief was extremely chagrined when he learned of my mistake, and that there was nothing for him to do. But I was feeling so happy myself that I hated to have anyone else miserable, so I suggested that this attempt to steal the Czarina's necklace might be only the first of a series of such attempts by an unscrupulous gang, and that I might still be in danger.

"I winked at the Chief and the Chief smiled at me, and we went to Nice together in a saloon car with a guard of twelve carabineers and twelve plainclothes men, and the Chief and I drank champagne all the way. We marched together up to the hotel where the Russian Ambassador was stopping, closely surrounded by our escort of carabineers, and delivered the necklace with the most profound ceremony. The old Ambassador was immensely impressed, and when we hinted that already I had been made the object of an attack by robbers, he assured us that his Imperial Majesty would not prove ungrateful.

"I wrote a swinging personal letter about the invaluable services of the Chief to the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, and they gave him enough Russian and French medals to satisfy even a French soldier. So, though he never caught the woman, he received his just reward."

The Queen's Messenger paused and surveyed the faces of those about him in some embarrassment.

"But the worst of it is," he added, "that the story must have got about; for, while the Princess obtained nothing from me but a cigar-case and five excellent cigars, a few weeks after the coronation the Czar sent me a gold cigar-case with his monogram in diamonds. And I don't know yet whether that was a coincidence, or whether the Czar wanted me to know that he knew that I had been carrying the Czarina's diamonds in my pigskin cigar-case. What do you fellows think?"

III

Sir Andrew rose with disapproval written in every lineament.

"I thought your story would bear upon the murder," he said. "Had I imagined it would have nothing whatsoever to do with it I would not have remained." He pushed back his chair and bowed stiffly. "I wish you good night," he said.

There was a chorus of remonstrance, and under cover of this and the Baronet's answering protests a servant for the second time slipped a piece of paper into the hand of the gentleman with the pearl stud. He read the lines written upon it and tore it into tiny fragments.

The youngest member, who had remained an interested but silent listener to the tale of the Queen's Messenger, raised his hand commandingly.

"Sir Andrew," he cried, "in justice to Lord Arthur Chetney I must ask you to be seated. He has been accused in our hearing of a most serious crime, and I must insist that you remain until you have heard me clear his character."

"You!" cried the Baronet.

"Yes," answered the young man briskly. "I would have spoken sooner," he explained, "but that I thought this gentleman"—he inclined his head toward the Queen's Messenger—"was about to contribute some facts of which I was ignorant. He, however, has told us nothing, and so I will take up the tale at the point where Lieutenant Sears laid it down and give you those details of which Lieutenant Sears is ignorant. It seems strange to you that I should be able to add the sequel to this story. But the coincidence is easily explained. I am the junior member of the law firm of Chudleigh & Chudleigh. We have been solicitors for the Chetneys for the last two hundred years. Nothing, no matter how unimportant, which concerns Lord Edam and his two sons is unknown to us, and naturally we are acquainted with every detail of the terrible catastrophe of last night."

The Baronet, bewildered but eager, sank back into his chair.

"Will you be long, sir?" he demanded.

"I shall endeavor to be brief," said the young solicitor; "and," he added, in a tone which gave his words almost the weight of a threat, "I promise to be interesting."

"There is no need to promise that," said Sir Andrew, "I find it much too interesting as it is." He glanced ruefully at the clock and turned his eyes quickly from it.

"Tell the driver of that hansom," he called to the servant, "that I take him by the hour."

"For the last three days," began young Mr. Chudleigh, "as you have probably read in the daily papers, the Marquis of Edam has been at the point of death, and his physicians have never left his house. Every hour he seemed to grow weaker; but although his bodily strength is apparently leaving him forever, his mind has remained clear and active. Late yesterday evening word was received at our office that he wished my father to come at once to Chetney House and to bring with him certain papers. What these papers were is not essential; I mention them only to explain how it was that last night I happened to be at Lord Edam's bedside. I accompanied my father to Chetney House, but at the time we reached there Lord Edam was sleeping, and his physicians refused to have him awakened. My father urged that he should be allowed to receive Lord Edam's instruction concerning the documents, but the physicians would not disturb him, and we all gathered in the library to wait until he should awake of his own accord. It was about one o'clock in the morning, while we were still there, that Inspector Lyle and the officers from Scotland Yard came to arrest Lord Arthur on the charge of murdering his brother. You can imagine our dismay and distress. Like everyone else, I had learned from the afternoon papers that Lord Chetney was not dead, but that he had returned to England, and on arriving at Chetney House I had been told that Lord Arthur had gone to the Bath Hotel to look for his brother and to inform him that if he wished to see their father alive he must come to him at once. Although it was now past one o'clock, Arthur had not returned. None of us knew where Madame Zichy lived, so we could not go to recover Lord Chetney's body. We spent a most miserable night, hastening to the window whenever a cab came into the square, in the hope that it was Arthur returning, and endeavoring to explain away the facts that pointed to him as the murderer. I am a friend of Arthur's, I was with him at Harrow and at Oxford, and I refused to believe for an instant that he was capable of such a crime; but as a lawyer I could not help but see that the circumstantial evidence was strongly against him.

"Toward early morning Lord Edam awoke, and in so much better a state of health that he refused to make the changes in the papers which he had intended, declaring that he was no nearer death than ourselves. Under other circumstances, this happy change in him would have relieved us greatly, but none of us could think of anything save the death of his elder son and of the charge which hung over Arthur.

"As long as Inspector Lyle remained in the house my father decided that I, as one of the legal advisers of the family, should also remain there. But there was little for either of us to do. Arthur did not return, and nothing occurred until late this morning, when Lyle received word that the Russian servant had been arrested. He at once drove to Scotland Yard to question him. He came back to us in an hour, and informed me that the servant had refused to tell anything of what had happened the night before, or of himself, or of the Princess Zichy. He would not even give them the address of her house.

" 'He is in abject terror,' Lyle said. 'I assured him that he was not suspected of the crime, but he would tell me nothing.'

"There were no other developments until two o'clock this afternoon, when word was brought to us that Arthur had been found, and that he was lying in the accident ward of St. George's Hospital. Lyle and I drove there together, and found him propped up in bed with his head bound in a bandage. He had been brought to the hospital the night before by the driver of a hansom that had run over him in the fog. The cab-horse had kicked him on the head, and he had been carried in unconscious. There was nothing on him to tell who he was, and it was not until he came to his senses this afternoon that the hospital authorities had been able to send word to his people. Lyle at once informed him that he was under arrest, and with what he was charged, and though the inspector warned him to say nothing which might be used against him, I, as his solicitor, instructed him to speak freely and to tell us all he knew of the occurrences of last night. It was evident to any one that the fact of his brother's death was of much greater concern to him, than that he was accused of his murder.

" 'That,' Arthur said contemptuously, 'that is damned nonsense. It is monstrous and cruel. We parted better friends than we have been in years. I will tell you all that happened—not to clear myself, but to help you to find out the truth.' His story is as follows: Yesterday afternoon, owing to his constant attendance on his father, he did not

look at the evening papers, and it was not until after dinner, when the butler brought him one and told him of its contents, that he learned that his brother was alive and at the Bath Hotel. He drove there at once, but was told that about eight o'clock his brother had gone out, but without giving any clew to his destination. As Chetney had not at once come to see his father, Arthur decided that he was still angry with him, and his mind, turning naturally to the cause of their quarrel, determined him to look for Chetney at the home of the Princess Zichy.

"Her house had been pointed out to him, and though he had never visited it, he had passed it many times and knew its exact location. He accordingly drove in that direction, as far as the fog would permit the hansom to go, and walked the rest of the way, reaching the house about nine o'clock. He rang, and was admitted by the Russian servant. The man took his card into the drawing-room, and at once his brother ran out and welcomed him. He was followed by the Princess Zichy, who also received Arthur most cordially.

" 'You brothers will have much to talk about,' she said. 'I am going to the dining-room. When you have finished, let me know.'

"As soon as she had left them, Arthur told his brother that their father was not expected to outlive the night, and that he must come to him at once.

" 'This is not the moment to remember your quarrel,' Arthur said to him; 'you have come back from the dead only in time to make your peace with him before he dies.'

"Arthur says that at this Chetney was greatly moved.

" 'You entirely misunderstand me, Arthur,' he returned. 'I did not know the governor was ill, or I would have gone to him the instant I arrived. My only reason for not doing so was because I thought he was still angry with me. I shall return with you immediately, as soon as I have said good-by to the Princess. It is a final good-by. After to-night, I shall never see her again.'

" 'Do you mean that?' Arthur cried.

" 'Yes,' Chetney answered. 'When I returned to London I had no intention of seeking her again, and I am here only through a mistake.' He then told Arthur that he had separated from the Princess even before he went to Central Africa, and that, moreover, while at Cairo on his way south, he had learned certain facts concerning her life there

during the previous season, which made it impossible for him to ever wish to see her again. Their separation was final and complete.

"'She deceived me cruelly,' he said; 'I cannot tell you how cruelly. During the two years when I was trying to obtain my father's consent to our marriage she was in love with a Russian diplomat. During all that time he was secretly visiting her here in London, and her trip to Cairo was only an excuse to meet him there.'

"'Yet you are here with her tonight,' Arthur protested, 'only a few hours after your return.'

"'That is easily explained,' Chetney answered. 'As I finished dinner tonight at the hotel, I received a note from her from this address. In it she said she had but just learned of my arrival, and begged me to come to her at once. She wrote that she was in great and present trouble, dying of an incurable illness, and without friends or money. She begged me, for the sake of old times, to come to her assistance. During the last two years in the jungle all my former feeling for Zichy has utterly passed away, but no one could have dismissed the appeal she made in that letter. So I came here, and found her, as you have seen her, quite as beautiful as she ever was, in very good health, and, from the look of the house, in no need of money.

"'I asked her what she meant by writing me that she was dying in a garret, and she laughed, and said she had done so because she was afraid, unless I thought she needed help, I would not try to see her. That was where we were when you arrived. And now,' Chetney added, 'I will say good-by to her, and you had better return home. No, you can trust me, I shall follow you at once. She has no influence over me now, but I believe, in spite of the way she has used me, that she is, after her queer fashion, still fond of me, and when she learns that this good-by is final there may be a scene, and it is not fair to her that you should be here. So, go home at once, and tell the governor that I am following you in ten minutes.'

"'That,' said Arthur, 'is the way we parted. I never left him on more friendly terms. I was happy to see him alive again, I was happy to think he had returned in time to make up his quarrel with my father, and I was happy that at last he was shut of that woman. I was never better pleased with him in my life.' He turned to Inspector Lyle, who was sitting at the foot of the bed taking notes of all he told us.

"'Why in the name of common sense,' he cried, 'should I have chosen that moment of all others to send my brother back to the grave?' For a moment the Inspector did not answer him. I do not know if any of you gentlemen are acquainted with Inspector Lyle, but if you are not, I can assure you that he is a very remarkable man. Our firm often applies to him for aid, and he has never failed us; my father has the greatest possible respect for him. Where he has the advantage over the ordinary police official is in the fact that he possesses imagination. He imagines himself to be the criminal, imagines how he would act under the same circumstances, and he imagines to such purpose that he generally finds the man he wants. I have often told Lyle that if he had not been a detective he would have made a great success as a poet, or a playwright.

"When Arthur turned on him Lyle hesitated for a moment, and then told him exactly what was the case against him.

"'Ever since your brother was reported as having died in Africa,' he said, 'your Lordship has been collecting money on post-obits. Lord Chetney's arrival last night turned them into waste paper. You were suddenly in debt for thousands of pounds—for much more than you could ever possibly pay. No one knew that you and your brother had met at Madame Zichy's. But you knew that your father was not expected to outlive the night, and that if your brother were dead also, you would be saved from complete ruin, and that you would become the Marquis of Edam.'

"'Oh, that is how you have worked it out, is it?' Arthur cried. 'And for me to become Lord Edam was it necessary that the woman should die, too?'

"'They will say,' Lyle answered, 'that she was a witness to the murder—that she would have told.'

"'Then why did I not kill the servant as well?' Arthur said.

"'He was asleep, and saw nothing.'

"'And you believe *that?*' Arthur demanded.

"'It is not a question of what I believe,' Lyle said gravely. 'It is a question for your peers.'

"'The man is insolent!' Arthur cried. 'The thing is monstrous! Horrible!'

"Before we could stop him he sprang out of his cot and began pull-

ing on his clothes. When the nurses tried to hold him down, he fought with them.

"'Do you think you can keep me here,' he shouted, 'when they are plotting to hang me? I am going with you to that house!' he cried at Lyle. 'When you find those bodies I shall be beside you. It is my right. He is my brother. He has been murdered, and I can tell you who murdered him. That woman murdered him. She first ruined his life, and now she has killed him. For the last five years she has been plotting to make herself his wife, and last night, when he told her he had discovered the truth about the Russian, and that she would never see him again, she flew into a passion and stabbed him, and then, in terror of the gallows, killed herself. She murdered him, I tell you, and I promise you that we will find the knife she used near her—perhaps still in her hand. What will you say to that?'

"Lyle turned his head away and stared down at the floor. 'I might say,' he answered, 'that you placed it there.'

"Arthur gave a cry of anger and sprang at him, and then pitched forward into his arms. The blood was running from the cut under the bandage, and he had fainted. Lyle carried him back to the bed again, and we left him with the police and the doctors, and drove at once to the address he had given us. We found the house not three minutes' walk from St. George's Hospital. It stands in Trevor Terrace, that little row of houses set back from Knightsbridge, with one end in Hill Street.

"As we left the hospital Lyle had said to me, 'You must not blame me for treating him as I did. All is fair in this work, and if by angering that boy I could have made him commit himself I was right in trying to do so; though, I assure you, no one would be better pleased than myself if I could prove his theory to be correct. But we cannot tell. Everything depends upon what we see for ourselves within the next few minutes.'

"When we reached the house, Lyle broke open the fastenings of one of the windows on the ground floor, and, hidden by the trees in the garden, we scrambled in. We found ourselves in the reception-room, which was the first room on the right of the hall. The gas was still burning behind the colored glass and red silk shades, and when the daylight streamed in after us it gave the hall a hideously dissipated look, like the foyer of a theatre at a matinée, or the entrance to an all-

day gambling hell. The house was oppressively silent, and because we knew why it was so silent we spoke in whispers. When Lyle turned the handle of the drawing-room door, I felt as though some one had put his hand upon my throat. But I followed close at his shoulder, and saw, in the subdued light of many-tinted lamps, the body of Chetney at the foot of the divan, just as Lieutenant Sears had described it. In the dining-room we found the body of the Princess Zichy, her arms thrown out, and the blood from her heart frozen in a tiny line across her bare shoulder. But neither of us, although we searched the floor on our hands and knees, could find the weapon which had killed her.

" 'For Arthur's sake,' I said, 'I would have given a thousand pounds if we had found the knife in her hand, as he said we would.'

" 'That we have not found it there,' Lyle answered, 'is to my mind the strongest proof that he is telling the truth, that he left the house before the murder took place. He is not a fool, and had he stabbed his brother and this woman, he would have seen that by placing the knife near her he could help to make it appear as if she had killed Chetney and then committed suicide. Besides, Lord Arthur insisted that the evidence in his behalf would be our finding the knife here. He would not have urged that if he knew we would *not* find it, if he knew he himself had carried it away. This is no suicide. A suicide does not rise and hide the weapon with which he kills himself, and then lie down again. No, this has been a double murder, and we must look outside of the house for the murderer.'

"While he was speaking Lyle and I had been searching every corner, studying the details of each room. I was so afraid that, without telling me, he would make some deductions prejudicial to Arthur, that I never left his side. I was determined to see everything that he saw, and, if possible, to prevent his interpreting it in the wrong way. He finally finished his examination, and we sat down together in the drawing-room, and he took out his notebook and read aloud all that Mr. Sears had told him of the murder and what we had just learned from Arthur. We compared the two accounts word for word, and weighed statement with statement, but I could not determine from anything Lyle said which of the two versions he had decided to believe.

" 'We are trying to build a house of blocks,' he exclaimed, 'with half of the blocks missing. We have been considering two theories,' he went on: 'one that Lord Arthur is responsible for both murders, and

the other that the dead woman in there is responsible for one of them, and has committed suicide; but, until the Russian servant is ready to talk, I shall refuse to believe in the guilt of either.'

"'What can you prove by him?' I asked. 'He was drunk and asleep. He saw nothing.'

"Lyle hesitated, and then, as though he had made up his mind to be quite frank with me, spoke freely.

"'I do not know that he was either drunk or asleep,' he answered. 'Lieutenant Sears describes him as a stupid boor. I am not satisfied that he is not a clever actor. What was his position in this house? What was his real duty here? Suppose it was not to guard this woman, but to watch her. Let us imagine that it was not the woman he served, but a master, and see where that leads us. For this house has a master, a mysterious, absentee landlord, who lives in St. Petersburg, the unknown Russian who came between Chetney and Zichy, and because of whom Chetney left her. He is the man who bought this house for Madame Zichy, who sent these rugs and curtains from St. Petersburg to furnish it for her after his own tastes, and, I believe, it was he also who placed the Russian servant here, ostensibly to serve the Princess, but in reality to spy upon her. At Scotland Yard we do not know who this gentleman is; the Russian police confess to equal ignorance concerning him. When Lord Chetney went to Africa, Madame Zichy lived in St. Petersburg; but there her receptions and dinners were so crowded with members of the nobility and of the army and diplomats, that among so many visitors the police could not learn which was the one for whom she most greatly cared.'

"Lyle pointed at the modern French paintings and the heavy silk rugs which hung upon the walls.

"'The unknown is a man of taste and of some fortune,' he said, 'not the sort of man to send a stupid peasant to guard the woman he loves. So I am not content to believe, with Mr. Sears, that the servant is a boor. I believe him instead to be a very clever ruffian. I believe him to be the protector of his master's honor, or, let us say, of his master's property, whether that property be silver plate or the woman his master loves. Last night, after Lord Arthur had gone away, the servant was left alone in this house with Lord Chetney and Madame Zichy. From where he sat in the hall he could hear Lord Chetney bidding her farewell; for, if my idea of him is correct, he understands English

quite as well as you or I. Let us imagine that he heard her entreating Chetney not to leave her, reminding him of his former wish to marry her, and let us suppose that he hears Chetney denounce her, and tell her that at Cairo he has learned of this Russian admirer—the servant's master. He hears the woman declare that she has had no admirer but himself, that this unknown Russian was, and is, nothing to her, that there is no man she loves but him, and that she cannot live, knowing that he is alive, without his love. Suppose Chetney believed her, suppose his former infatuation for her returned, and that in a moment of weakness he forgave her and took her in his arms. That is the moment the Russian master has feared. It is to guard against it that he has placed his watchdog over the Princess, and how do we know but that, when the moment came, the watchdog served his master, as he saw his duty, and killed them both? 'What do you think?' Lyle demanded. 'Would not that explain both murders?'

"I was only too willing to hear any theory which pointed to any one else as the criminal than Arthur, but Lyle's explanation was too utterly fantastic. I told him that he certainly showed imagination, but that he could not hang a man for what he imagined he had done.

" 'No,' Lyle answered, 'but I can frighten him by telling him what I think he has done, and now when I again question the Russian servant I will make it quite clear to him that I believe he is the murderer. I think that will open his mouth. A man will at least talk to defend himself. Come,' he said, 'we must return at once to Scotland Yard and see him. There is nothing more to do here.'

"He arose, and I followed him into the hall, and in another minute we would have been on our way to Scotland Yard. But just as he opened the street door a postman halted at the gate of the garden, and began fumbling with the latch.

"Lyle stopped, with an exclamation of chagrin.

" 'How stupid of me!' he exclaimed. He turned quickly and pointed to a narrow slit cut in the brass plate of the front door. 'The house has a private letter-box,' he said, 'and I had not thought to look in it! If we had gone out as we came in, by the window, I would never have seen it. The moment I entered the house I should have thought of securing the letters which came this morning. I have been grossly careless.' He stepped back into the hall and pulled at the lid of the letter-box, which hung on the inside of the door, but it was tightly locked.

At the same moment the postman came up the steps holding a letter. Without a word Lyle took it from his hand and began to examine it. It was addressed to the Princess Zichy, and on the back of the envelope was the name of a West End dressmaker.

"'That is of no use to me,' Lyle said. He took out his card and showed it to the postman. 'I am Inspector Lyle from Scotland Yard,' he said. 'The people in this house are under arrest. Everything it contains is now in my keeping. Did you deliver any other letters here this morning?'

"The man looked frightened, but answered promptly that he was now upon his third round. He had made one postal delivery at seven that morning and another at eleven.

"'How many letters did you leave here?' Lyle asked.

"'About six altogether,' the man answered.

"'Did you put them through the door into the letter-box?'

"The postman said, 'Yes, I always slip them into the box and ring and go away. The servants collect them from the inside.'

"'Have you noticed if any of the letters you leave here bear a Russian postage stamp?' Lyle asked.

"The man answered, 'Oh, yes, sir, a great many.'

"'From the same person, would you say?'

"'The writing seems to be the same,' the man answered. 'They come regularly about once a week—one of those I delivered this morning had a Russian postmark.'

"'That will do,' said Lyle eagerly. 'Thank you, thank you very much.'

"He ran back into the hall, and, pulling out his penknife, began to pick at the lock of the letter-box.

"'I have been supremely careless,' he said in great excitement. 'Twice before when people I wanted had flown from a house I have been able to follow them by putting a guard over their mail-box. These letters, which arrive regularly every week from Russia in the same handwriting, they can come but from one person. At least, we shall now know the name of the master of this house. Undoubtedly it is one of his letters that the man placed here this morning. We may make a most important discovery.'

"As he was talking he was picking at the lock with his knife, but he was so impatient to reach the letters that he pressed too heavily on the

blade and it broke in his hand. I took a step backward and drove my heel into the lock, and burst it open. The lid flew back, and we pressed forward, and each ran his hand down into the letter-box. For a moment we were both too startled to move. The box was empty.

"I do not know how long we stood staring stupidly at each other, but it was Lyle who was the first to recover. He seized me by the arm and pointed excitedly into the empty box.

" 'Do you appreciate what that means?' he cried. 'It means that someone has been here ahead of us. Someone has entered this house not three hours before we came, since eleven o'clock this morning.'

" 'It was the Russian servant!' I exclaimed.

" 'The Russian servant has been under arrest at Scotland Yard,' Lyle cried. 'He could not have taken the letters. Lord Arthur has been in his cot at the hospital. That is his alibi. There is someone else, someone we do not suspect, and that someone is the murderer. He came back here either to obtain those letters because he knew they would convict him, or to remove something he had left here at the time of the murder, something incriminating,—the weapon, perhaps, or some personal article; a cigarette-case, a handkerchief with his name upon it, or a pair of gloves. Whatever it was it must have been damning evidence against him to have made him take so desperate a chance.'

" 'How do we know,' I whispered, 'that he is not hidden here now?'

" 'No, I'll swear he is not,' Lyle answered. 'I may have bungled in some things, but I have searched this house thoroughly. Nevertheless,' he added, 'we must go over it again, from the cellar to the roof. We have the real clew now, and we must forget the others and work only it.' As he spoke he began again to search the drawing-room, turning over even the books on the tables and the music on the piano.

" 'Whoever the man is,' he said over his shoulder, 'we know that he has a key to the front door and a key to the letter-box. That shows us he is either an inmate of the house or that he comes here when he wishes. The Russian says that he was the only servant in the house. Certainly we have found no evidence to show that any other servant slept here. There could be but one other person who would possess a key to the house and the letter-box—and he lives in St. Petersburg. At the time of the murder he was two thousand miles away.' Lyle interrupted himself suddenly with a sharp cry and turned upon me with his eyes flashing. 'But was he?' he cried. 'Was he? How do we know

that last night he was not in London, in this very house when Zichy and Chetney met?'

"He stood staring at me without seeing me, muttering, and arguing with himself.

"'Don't speak to me,' he cried, as I ventured to interrupt him. 'I can see it now. It is all plain. It was not the servant, but his master, the Russian himself, and it was he who came back for the letters! He came back for them because he knew they would convict him. We must find them. We must have those letters. If we find the one with the Russian postmark, we shall have found the murderer.' He spoke like a madman, and as he spoke he ran around the room with one hand held out in front of him as you have seen a mind-reader at a theatre seeking for something hidden in the stalls. He pulled the old letters from the writing-desk, and ran them over as swiftly as a gambler deals out cards; he dropped on his knees before the fireplace and dragged out the dead coals with his bare fingers, and then with a low, worried cry, like a hound on a scent, he ran back to the waste-paper basket and, lifting the papers from it, shook them out upon the floor. Instantly he gave a shout of triumph, and, separating a number of torn pieces from the others, held them up before me.

"'Look!' he cried. 'Do you see? Here are five letters, torn across in two places. The Russian did not stop to read them, for, as you see, he has left them still sealed. I have been wrong. He did not return for the letters. He could not have known their value. He must have returned for some other reason, and, as he was leaving, saw the letter-box, and taking out the letters, held them together—so—and tore them twice across, and then, as the fire had gone out, tossed them into this basket. Look!' he cried, 'here in the upper corner of this piece is a Russian stamp. This is his own letter—unopened!'

"We examined the Russian stamp and found it had been cancelled in St. Petersburg four days ago. The back of the envelope bore the postmark of the branch station in upper Sloane Street, and was dated this morning. The envelope was of official blue paper and we had no difficulty in finding the two other parts of it. We drew the torn pieces of the letter from them and joined them together side by side. There were but two lines of writing, and this was the message: 'I leave Petersburg on the night train, and I shall see you at Trevor Terrace after dinner Monday evening.'

" 'That was last night!' Lyle cried. 'He arrived twelve hours ahead of his letter—but it came in time—it came in time to hang him!' "

The Baronet struck the table with his hand.

"The name!" he demanded. "How was it signed? What was the man's name?"

The young Solicitor rose to his feet and, leaning forward, stretched out his arm. "There was no name," he cried. "The letter was signed with only two initials. But engraved at the top of the sheet was the man's address. That address was 'The American Embassy, St. Petersburg, Bureau of the Naval Attaché,' and the initials," he shouted, his voice rising into an exultant and bitter cry, "were those of the gentleman who sits opposite who told us that he was the first to find the murdered bodies, the Naval Attaché to Russia, Lieutenant Sears!"

A strained and awful hush followed the Solicitor's words which seemed to vibrate like a twanging bowstring that had just hurled its bolt. Sir Andrew, pale and staring, drew away with an exclamation of repulsion. His eyes were fastened upon the Naval Attaché with fascinated horror. But the American emitted a sigh of great content, and sank comfortably into the arms of his chair. He clapped his hands softly together.

"Capital!" he murmured. "I give you my word I never guessed what you were driving at. You fooled *me,* I'll be hanged if you didn't —you certainly fooled me."

The man with the pearl stud leaned forward with a nervous gesture. "Hush! be careful!" he whispered. But at that instant, for the third time, a servant, hastening through the room, handed him a piece of paper which he scanned eagerly. The message on the paper read, "The light over the Commons is out. The House has risen."

The man with the black pearl gave a mighty shout, and tossed the paper from him upon the table.

"Hurrah!" he cried. "The House is up! We've won!" He caught up his glass, and slapped the Naval Attaché violently upon the shoulder. He nodded joyously at him, at the Solicitor, and at the Queen's Messenger. "Gentlemen, to you!" he cried; "my thanks and my congratulations!" He drank deep from the glass, and breathed forth a long sigh of satisfaction and relief.

"But I say," protested the Queen's Messenger, shaking his finger

violently at the Solicitor, "that story won't do. You didn't play fair —and—and you talked so fast I couldn't make out what it was all about. I'll bet you that evidence wouldn't hold in a court of law—you couldn't hang a cat on such evidence. Your story is condemned tommy-rot. Now my story might have happened, my story bore the mark—"

In the joy of creation the story-tellers had forgotten their audience, until a sudden exclamation from Sir Andrew caused them to turn guiltily toward him. His face was knit with lines of anger, doubt, and amazement.

"What does this mean?" he cried. "Is this a jest, or are you mad? If you know this man is a murderer, why is he at large? Is this a game you have been playing? Explain yourselves at once. What does it mean?"

The American, with first a glance at the others, rose and bowed courteously.

"I am not a murderer, Sir Andrew, believe me," he said; "you need not be alarmed. As a matter of fact, at this moment I am much more afraid of you than you could possibly be of me. I beg you please to be indulgent. I assure you, we meant no disrespect. We have been matching stories, that is all, pretending that we are people we are not, endeavoring to entertain you with better detective tales than, for instance, the last one you read, 'The Great Rand Robbery.' "

The Baronet brushed his hand nervously across his forehead.

"Do you mean to tell me," he exclaimed, "that none of this has happened? That Lord Chetney is not dead, that his Solicitor did not find a letter of yours written from your post in Petersburg, and that just now, when he charged you with murder, he was in jest?"

"I am really very sorry," said the American, "but you see, sir, he could not have found a letter written by me in St. Petersburg because I have never been in Petersburg. Until this week, I have never been outside of my own country. I am not a naval officer. I am a writer of short stories. And tonight, when this gentleman told me that you were fond of detective stories, I thought it would be amusing to tell you one of my own—one I had just mapped out this afternoon."

"But Lord Chetney *is* a real person," interrupted the Baronet, "and he did go to Africa two years ago, and he was supposed to have died

there, and his brother, Lord Arthur, has been the heir. And yesterday Chetney did return. I read it in the papers."

"So did I," assented the American soothingly; "and it struck me as being a very good plot for a story. I mean his unexpected return from the dead, and the probable disappointment of the younger brother. So I decided that the younger brother had better murder the older one. The Princess Zichy I invented out of a clear sky. The fog I did not have to invent. Since last night I know all that there is to know about a London fog. I was lost in one for three hours."

The Baronet turned grimly upon the Queen's Messenger.

"But this gentleman," he protested, "he is not a writer of short stories; he is a member of the Foreign Office. I have often seen him in Whitehall, and, according to him, the Princess Zichy is not an invention. He says she is very well known, that she tried to rob him."

The servant of the Foreign Office looked unhappily at the Cabinet Minister, and puffed nervously on his cigar.

"It's true, Sir Andrew, that I am a Queen's Messenger," he said appealingly, "and a Russian woman once did try to rob a Queen's Messenger in a railway carriage—only it did not happen to me, but to a pal of mine. The only Russian princess I ever knew called herself Zabrisky. You may have seen her. She used to do a dive from the roof of the Aquarium."

Sir Andrew, with a snort of indignation, fronted the young Solicitor.

"And I suppose yours was a cock-and-bull story, too," he said. "Of course, it must have been, since Lord Chetney is not dead. But don't tell me," he protested, "that you are not Chudleigh's son either."

"I'm sorry," said the youngest member, smiling in some embarrassment, "but my name is not Chudleigh. I assure you, though, that I know the family very well, and that I am on very good terms with them."

"You should be!" exclaimed the Baronet; "and, judging from the liberties you take with the Chetneys, you had better be on very good terms with them, too."

The young man leaned back and glanced toward the servants at the far end of the room.

"It has been so long since I have been in the Club," he said, "that I doubt if even the waiters remember me. Perhaps Joseph may," he

added. "Joseph!" he called, and at the word a servant stepped briskly forward.

The young man pointed to the stuffed head of a great lion which was suspended above the fireplace.

"Joseph," he said, "I want you to tell these gentlemen who shot that lion. Who presented it to the Grill?"

Joseph, unused to acting as master of ceremonies to members of the Club, shifted nervously from one foot to the other.

"Why, you—you did," he stammered.

"Of course I did!" exclaimed the young man. "I mean, what is the name of the man who shot it? Tell the gentlemen who I am. They wouldn't believe me."

"Who you are, my lord?" said Joseph. "You are Lord Edam's son, the Earl of Chetney."

"You must admit," said Lord Chetney, when the noise had died away, "that I couldn't remain dead while my little brother was accused of murder. I had to do something. Family pride demanded it. Now, Arthur, as the younger brother, can't afford to be squeamish, but personally I should hate to have a brother of mine hanged for murder."

"You certainly showed no scruples against hanging me," said the American, "but in the face of your evidence I admit my guilt, and I sentence myself to pay the full penalty of the law as we are made to pay it in my own country. The order of this court is," he announced, "that Joseph shall bring me a wine-card, and that I sign it for five bottles of the Club's best champagne."

"Oh, no!" protested the man with the pearl stud, "it is not for *you* to sign it. In my opinion it is Sir Andrew who should pay the costs. It is time you knew," he said, turning to that gentleman, "that unconsciously you have been the victim of what I may call a patriotic conspiracy. These stories have had a more serious purpose than merely to amuse. They have been told with the worthy object of detaining you from the House of Commons. I must explain to you, that all through this evening I have had a servant waiting in Trafalgar Square with instructions to bring me word as soon as the light over the House of Commons had ceased to burn. The light is now out, and the object for which we plotted is attained."

The Baronet glanced keenly at the man with the black pearl, and

then quickly at his watch. The smile disappeared from his lips, and his face was set in stern and forbidding lines.

"And may I know," he asked icily, "what was the object of your plot?"

"A most worthy one," the other retorted. "Our object was to keep you from advocating the expenditure of many millions of the people's money upon more battleships. In a word, we have been working together to prevent you from passing the Navy Increase Bill."

Sir Andrew's face bloomed with brilliant color. His body shook with suppressed emotion.

"My dear sir!" he cried, "you should spend more time at the House and less at your Club. The Navy Bill was brought up on its third reading at eight o'clock this evening. I spoke for three hours in its favor. My only reason for wishing to return again to the House tonight was to sup on the terrace with my old friend, Admiral Simons; for my work at the House was completed five hours ago, when the Navy Increase Bill was passed by an overwhelming majority."

The Baronet rose and bowed. "I have to thank you, sir," he said, "for a most interesting evening."

The American shoved the wine-card which Joseph had given him toward the gentleman with the black pearl.

"You sign it," he said.

Zodomirsky's Duel

BY ALEXANDRE DUMAS

(*1802-1870*)

I

At the time of this story our regiment was stationed in the dirty little village of Valins, on the frontier of Austria.

It was the fourth of May in the year 182–, and I, with several other officers, had been breakfasting with the Aide-de-Camp in honor of his birthday, and discussing the various topics of the garrison.

"Can you tell us without being indiscreet," asked Sub-Lieutenant Stamm of Andrew Michaelovitch, the Aide-de-Camp, "what the Colonel was so eager to say to you this morning?"

"A new officer," he replied, "is to fill the vacancy of captain."

"His name?" demanded two or three voices.

"Lieutenant Zodomirsky, who is betrothed to the beautiful Mariana Ravensky."

"And when does he arrive?" asked Major Belayef.

"He *has* arrived. I have been presented to him at the Colonel's house. He is very anxious to make your acquaintance, gentlemen, and I have therefore invited him to dine with us. But that reminds me, Captain, you must know him," he continued, turning to me; "you were both in the same regiment at St. Petersburg."

"It is true," I replied. "We studied there together. He was then a brave, handsome youth, adored by his comrades, in every one's good graces, but of a fiery and irritable temper."

"Mademoiselle Ravensky informed me that he was a skillful duelist," said Stamm. "Well, he will do very well here; a duel is a family affair with us. You are welcome, Monsieur Zodomirsky. However quick your temper, you must be careful of it before me, or I shall take upon myself to cool it."

And Stamm pronounced these words with a visible sneer.

"How is it that he leaves the Guards? Is he ruined?" asked Cornet Naletoff.

"I have been informed," replied Stamm, "that he has just inherited from an old aunt about twenty thousand rubles. No, poor devil! he is consumptive."

"Come, gentlemen," said the Aide-de-Camp, rising, "let us pass to the saloon and have a game of cards. Koloff will serve dinner while we play."

We had been seated some time, and Stamm, who was far from rich, was in the act of losing sixty rubles, when Koloff announced:

"Captain Zodomirsky."

"Here you are, at last!" cried Michaelovitch, jumping from his chair. "You are welcome."

Then, turning to us, he continued: "These are your new comrades, Captain Zodomirsky; all good fellows and brave soldiers."

"Gentlemen," said Zodomirsky, "I am proud and happy to have joined your regiment. To do so has been my greatest desire for some time, and if I am welcome, as you courteously say, I shall be the happiest man in the world."

"Ah! good day, Captain," he continued, turning to me and holding out his hand. "We meet again. You have not forgotten an old friend, I hope?"

As he smilingly uttered these words, Stamm, to whom his back was turned, darted at him a glance full of bitter hatred. Stamm was not liked in the regiment; his cold and taciturn nature had formed no friendship with any of us. I could not understand his apparent hostility toward Zodomirsky, whom I believed he had never seen before.

Some one offered Zodomirsky a cigar. He accepted it, lit it at the cigar of an officer near him, and began to talk gaily to his new comrades.

"Do you stay here long?" asked Major Belayef.

"Yes, monsieur," replied Zodomirsky. "I wish to stay with you as long as possible," and as he pronounced these words he saluted us all round with a smile. He continued: "I have taken a house near that of my old friend Ravensky whom I knew at St. Petersburg. I have my horses there, an excellent cook, a passable library, a little

garden, and a target; and there I shall be quiet as a hermit, and happy as a king. It is the life that suits me."

"Ha! you practise shooting!" said Stamm, in such a strange voice, accompanied by a smile so sardonic, that Zodomirsky regarded him in astonishment.

"It is my custom every morning to fire twelve balls," he replied.

"You are very fond of that amusement, then?" demanded Stamm, in a voice without any trace of emotion; adding, "I do not understand the use of shooting, unless it is to hunt with."

Zodomirsky's pale face was flushed with a sudden flame. He turned to Stamm, and replied in a quiet but firm voice: "I think, monsieur, that you are wrong in calling it lost time to learn to shoot with a pistol; in our garrison life an imprudent word often leads to a meeting between comrades, in which case he who is known for a good shot inspires respect among those indiscreet persons who amuse themselves in asking useless questions."

"Oh! that is not a reason, Captain. In duels, as in everything else, something should be left to chance. I maintain my first opinion, and say that an honorable man ought not to take too many precautions."

"And why?" asked Zodomirsky.

"I will explain to you," replied Stamm. "Do you play at cards, Captain?"

"Why do you ask that question?"

"I will try to render my explanation clear, so that all will understand it. Every one knows that there are certain players who have an enviable knack, while shuffling the pack, of adroitly making themselves master of the winning card. Now, I see no difference, myself, between the man who robs his neighbor of his money and the one who robs him of his life." Then he added, in a way to take nothing from the insolence of his observation, "I do not say this to you, in particular, Captain; I speak in general terms."

"It is too much as it is, monsieur!" cried Zodomirsky. "I beg Captain Alexis Stephanovitch to terminate this affair with you." Then, turning to me, he said: "You will not refuse me this request?"

"So be it, Captain," replied Stamm quickly. "You have told me yourself you practise shooting every day, while I practise only on the day I fight. We will equalize the chances. I will settle details with Monsieur Stephanovitch."

Then he rose and turned to our host.

"*Au revoir,* Michaelovitch," he said. "I will dine at the Colonel's." And with these words he left the room.

The most profound silence had been kept during this altercation; but, as soon as Stamm disappeared, Captain Pravdine, an old officer, addressed himself to us all.

"We can not let them fight, gentlemen," he said.

Zodomirsky touched him gently on his arm.

"Captain," he said, "I am a newcomer among you; none of you know me. I have yet, as it were, to win my spurs; it is impossible for me to let this quarrel pass without fighting. I do not know what I have done to annoy this gentleman, but it is evident that he has some spite against me."

"The truth of the matter is that Stamm is jealous of you, Zodomirsky," said Cornet Naletoff. "It is well known that he is in love with Mademoiselle Ravensky."

"That, indeed, explains all," he replied. "However, gentlemen, I thank you for your kind sympathy in this affair from the bottom of my heart."

"And now to dinner, gentlemen!" cried Michaelovitch. "Place yourselves as you choose. The soup, Koloff; the soup!"

Everybody was very animated. Stamm seemed forgotten; only Zodomirsky appeared a little sad. Zodomirsky's health was drunk; he seemed touched with this significant attention, and thanked the officers with a broken voice.

"Stephanovitch," said Zodomirsky to me, when dinner was over, and all had risen, "since Monsieur Stamm knows you are my second and has accepted you as such, see him, and arrange everything with him; accept all his conditions; then meet Captain Pravdine and me at my rooms. The first who arrives will wait for the other. We are now going to Monsieur Ravensky's house."

"You will let us know the hour of combat?" said several voices.

"Certainly, gentlemen. Come and bid a last farewell to one of us."

We all parted at the Ravenskys' door, each officer shaking hands with Zodomirsky as with an old friend.

II

STAMM was waiting for me when I arrived at his house. His conditions were these: Two sabers were to be planted at a distance of one pace apart; each opponent to extend his arm at full length and fire at the word *"three."* One pistol alone was to be loaded.

I endeavored in vain to obtain another mode of combat.

"It is not a victim I offer to Monsieur Zodomirsky," said Stamm, "but an adversary. He will fight as I propose, or I will not fight at all; but in that case I shall prove that Monsieur Zodomirsky is brave only when sure of his own safety."

Zodomirsky's orders were imperative. I accepted.

When I entered Zodomirsky's rooms, they were vacant; he had not arrived. I looked round with curiosity. They were furnished in a rich but simple manner, and with evident taste. I drew a chair near the balcony and looked out over the plain. A storm was brewing; some drops of rain fell already, and thunder moaned.

At this instant the door opened, and Zodomirsky and Pravdine entered. I advanced to meet them.

"We are late, Captain," said Zodomirsky, "but it was unavoidable."

"And what says Stamm?" he continued.

I gave him his adversary's conditions. When I had ended, a sad smile passed over his face; he drew his hand across his forehead and his eyes glittered with feverish luster.

"I had foreseen this," he murmured. "You have accepted, I presume?"

"Did you not give me the order yourself?"

"Absolutely," he replied.

Zodomirsky threw himself in a chair by the table, in which position he faced the door. Pravdine placed himself near the window, and I near the fire. A presentiment weighed down our spirits. A mournful silence reigned.

Suddenly the door opened and a woman muffled in a mantle which streamed with water, and with the hood drawn over her face, pushed past the servant, and stood before us. She threw back the hood, and we recognized Mariana Ravensky!

Pravdine and I stood motionless with astonishment. Zodomirsky sprang toward her.

"Great heavens! what has happened, and why are you here?"

"Why am I here, George?" she cried. "Is it *you* who ask me, when this night is perhaps the last of your life? Why am I here? To say farewell to you. It is only two hours since I saw you, and not one word passed between us of tomorrow. Was that well, George?"

"But I am not alone here," said Zodomirsky in a low voice. "Think, Mariana. Your reputation—your fair fame—"

"Are you not all in all to me, George? And in such a time as this, what matters anything else?"

She threw her arm about his neck and pressed her head against his breast.

Pravdine and I made some steps to quit the room.

"Stay, gentlemen," she said, lifting her head. "Since you have seen me here, I have nothing more to hide from you, and perhaps you may be able to help me in what I am about to say." Then, suddenly flinging herself at his feet:

"I implore you, I command you, George," she cried, "not to fight this duel with Monsieur Stamm. You will not end two lives by such a useless act! Your life belongs to me; it is no longer yours. George, do you hear? You will not do this."

"Mariana! Mariana! in the name of Heaven do not torture me thus! Can I refuse to fight? I should be dishonored—lost! If I could do so cowardly an act, shame would kill me more surely than Stamm's pistol."

"Captain," she said to Pravdine, "you are esteemed in the regiment as a man of honor; you can, then, judge about affairs of honor. Have pity on me, Captain, and tell him he can refuse such a duel as this. Make him understand that it is not a duel, but an assassination; speak, speak, Captain, and if he will not listen to me, he will to you."

Pravdine was moved. His lips trembled and his eyes were dimmed with tears. He rose, and, approaching Mariana, respectfully kissed her hand, and said with a trembling voice:

"To spare you any sorrow, mademoiselle, I would lay down my life; but to counsel Monsieur Zodomirsky to be unworthy of his uniform by refusing this duel is impossible. Each adversary, your betrothed as well as Stamm, has a right to propose his conditions. But whatever be the conditions, the Captain is in circumstances which render this duel absolutely necessary. He is known as a skilful duelist; to refuse

Stamm's conditions were to indicate that he counts upon his skill."

"Enough, Mariana, enough," cried George. "Unhappy girl! you do not know what you demand. Do you wish me, then, to fall so low that you yourself would be ashamed of me? I ask you, are you capable of loving a dishonored man?"

Mariana had let herself fall upon a chair. She rose, pale as a corpse, and began to put her mantle on.

"You are right, George, it is not I who would love you no more, but you who would hate me. We must resign ourselves to our fate. Give me your hand, George; perhaps we shall never see each other again. Tomorrow! tomorrow! my love."

She threw herself upon his breast, without tears, without sobs, but with a profound despair.

She wished to depart alone, but Zodomirsky insisted on leading her home.

Midnight was striking when he returned.

"You had better both retire," said Zodomirsky as he entered. "I have several letters to write before sleeping. At five we must be at the rendezvous."

I felt so wearied that I did not want telling twice. Pravdine passed into the saloon, I into Zodomirsky's bedroom, and the master of the house into his study.

The cool air of the morning woke me. I cast my eyes upon the window, where the dawn commenced to appear. I heard Pravdine also stirring. I passed into the saloon, where Zodomirsky immediately joined us. His face was pale but serene.

"Are the horses ready?" he inquired.

I made a sign in the affirmative.

"Then, let us start," he said.

We mounted into the carriage and drove off.

III

"Ah," said Pravdine all at once, "there is Michaelovitch's carriage. Yes, yes, it is he with one of ours, and there is Naletoff, on his Circassian horse. Good! the others are coming behind. It is well we started so soon."

The carriage had to pass the house of the Ravenskys. I could not

refrain from looking up; the poor girl was at her window, motionless as a statue. She did not even nod to us.

"Quicker! quicker!" cried Zodomirsky to the coachman. It was the only sign by which I knew that he had seen Mariana.

Soon we distanced the other carriages, and arrived upon the place of combat—a plain where two great pyramids rose, passing in this district by the name of the "Tomb of the Two Brothers." The first rays of the sun darting through the trees began to dissipate the mists of night.

Michaelovitch arrived immediately after us, and in a few minutes we formed a group of nearly twenty persons. Then we heard the crunch of other steps upon the gravel. They were those of our opponents. Stamm walked first, holding in his hand a box of pistols. He bowed to Zodomirsky and the officers.

"Who gives the word to fire, gentlemen?" he asked.

The two adversaries and the seconds turned toward the officers, who regarded them with perplexity.

No one offered. No one wished to pronounce that terrible "three," which would sign the fate of a comrade.

"Major," said Zodomirsky to Belayef, "will you render me this service?"

Thus asked, the Major could not refuse, and he made a sign that he accepted.

"Be good enough to indicate our places, gentlemen," continued Zodomirsky, giving me his saber and taking off his coat; "then load, if you please."

"That is useless," said Stamm. "I have brought the pistols; one of the two is loaded, the other has only a gun-cap."

"Do you know which is which?" said Pravdine.

"What does it matter?" replied Stamm, "Monsieur Zodomirsky will choose."

"It is well," said Zodomirsky.

Belayef drew his saber and thrust it in the ground midway between the two pyramids. Then he took another saber and planted it before the first. One pace alone separated the two blades. Each adversary was to stand behind a saber, extending his arm at full length. In this way each had the muzzle of his opponent's pistol at six inches from his heart. While Belayef made these preparations Stamm unbuckled his

saber and divested himself of his coat. His seconds opened his box of pistols, and Zodomirsky, approaching, took without hesitation the nearest to him. Then he placed himself behind one of the sabers.

Stamm regarded him closely; not a muscle of Zodomirsky's face moved, and there was not about him the least appearance of bravado, but the calmness of courage.

"He is brave," murmured Stamm.

And taking the pistol left by Zodomirsky he took up his position behind the other saber, in front of his adversary.

They were both pale, but while the eyes of Zodomirsky burned with implacable resolution, those of Stamm were uneasy and shifting. I felt my heart beat loudly.

Belayef advanced. All eyes were fixed on him.

"Are you ready, gentlemen?" he asked.

"We are waiting, Major," replied Zodomirsky and Stamm together, and each lifted his pistol before the breast of the other.

A death-like silence reigned. Only the birds sang in the bushes near the place of combat. In the midst of this silence the Major's voice resounding made everyone tremble.

"One."

"Two."

"*Three.*"

Then we heard the sound of the hammer falling on the cap of Zodomirsky's pistol. There was a flash, but no sound followed it.

Stamm had not fired, and continued to hold the mouth of his pistol against the breast of his adversary.

"Fire!" said Zodomirsky, in a voice perfectly calm.

"It is not for you to command, monsieur," said Stamm; "it is I who must decide whether to fire or not, and that depends on how you answer what I am about to say."

"Speak, then; but in the name of Heaven speak quickly."

"Never fear, I will not abuse your patience."

We were all ears.

"I have not come to kill you, monsieur," continued Stamm. "I have come with the carelessness of a man to whom life holds nothing, while it has kept none of the promises it has made to him. You, monsieur, are rich, you are beloved, you have a promising future before you: life must be dear to you. But Fate has decided against you: it is you

who must die and not I. Well, Monsieur Zodomirsky, give me your word not to be so prompt in the future to fight duels, and I will not fire."

"I have not been prompt to call you out, monsieur," replied Zodomirsky in the same calm voice; "you have wounded me by an outrageous comparison, and I have been compelled to challenge you. Fire, then; I have nothing to say to you."

"My conditions can not wound your honor," insisted Stamm. "Be our judge, Major," he added, turning to Belayef. "I will abide by your opinion; perhaps Monsieur Zodomirsky will follow my example."

"Monsieur Zodomirsky has conducted himself as bravely as possible; if he is not killed, it is not his fault." Then, turning to the officers round, he said:

"Can Monsieur Zodomirsky accept the imposed condition?"

"He can! he can!" they cried, "and without staining his honor in the slightest."

Zodomirsky stood motionless.

"The Captain consents," said old Pravdine, advancing. "Yes, in the future he will be less prompt."

"It is you who speak, Captain, and not Monsieur Zodomirsky," said Stamm.

"Will you affirm my words, Monsieur Zodomirsky?" asked Pravdine, almost supplicating in his eagerness.

"I consent," said Zodomirsky, in a voice scarcely intelligible.

"Hurrah! hurrah!" cried all the officers, enchanted with this termination. Two or three threw up their caps.

"I am more charmed than anyone," said Stamm, "that all has ended as I desired. Now, Captain, I have shown you that before a resolute man the art of shooting is nothing in a duel, and that if the chances are equal a good shot is on the same level as a bad one. I did not wish in any case to kill you. Only I had a great desire to see how you would look death in the face. You are a man of courage; accept my compliments. The pistols were not loaded." Stamm, as he said these words, fired off his pistol. There was no report!

Zodomirsky uttered a cry which resembled the roar of a wounded lion.

"By my father's soul!" he cried, "this is a new offense, and more insulting than the first. Ah! it is ended, you say? No, monsieur, it

must recommence, and this time the pistols shall be loaded, if I have to load them myself."

"No, Captain," replied Stamm, tranquilly, "I have given you your life, I will not take it back. Insult me if you wish, I will not fight with you."

"Then it is with me whom you will fight, Monsieur Stamm," cried Pravdine, pulling off his coat. "You have acted like a scoundrel; you have deceived Zodomirsky and his seconds, and, in five minutes if your dead body is not lying at my feet, there is no such thing as justice."

Stamm was visibly confused. He had not bargained for this.

"And if the Captain does not kill you, I will!" said Naletoff.

"Or I!" "Or I!" cried with one voice all the officers.

"The devil! I can not fight with you all," replied Stamm. "Choose one among you, and I will fight with him, though it will not be a duel, but an assassination."

"Reassure yourself, monsieur," replied Major Belayef; "we will do nothing that the most scrupulous honor can complain of. All our officers are insulted, for under their uniform you have conducted yourself like a rascal. You can not fight with all; it is even probable you will fight with none. Hold yourself in readiness, then. You are to be judged. Gentlemen, will you approach?"

We surrounded the Major, and the fiat went forth without discussion. Everyone was of the same opinion.

Then the Major, who had played the rôle of president, approached Stamm, and said to him:

"Monsieur, you are lost to all the laws of honor. Your crime was premeditated in cold blood. You have made M. Zodomirsky pass through all the sensations of a man condemned to death, while you were perfectly at ease, you who knew that the pistols were not loaded. Finally, you have refused to fight with the man whom you have doubly insulted."

"Load the pistols! load them!" cried Stamm, exasperated. "I will fight with anyone!"

But the Major shook his head with a smile of contempt.

"No, Monsieur Lieutenant," he said, "you will fight no more with your comrades. You have stained your uniform. We can no longer

serve with you. The officers have charged me to say that, not wishing to make your deficiencies known to the Government, they ask you to give in your resignation on the cause of bad health. The surgeon will sign all necessary certificates. Today is the 3d of May: you have from now to the 3d of June to quit the regiment."

"I will quit it, certainly; not because it is your desire, but mine," said Stamm, picking up his saber and putting on his coat.

Then he leaped upon his horse, and galloped off toward the village, casting a last malediction to us all.

We all pressed round Zodomirsky. He was sad; more than sad, gloomy.

"Why did you force me to consent to this scoundrel's conditions, gentlemen?" he said. "Without you, I should never have accepted them."

"My comrades and I," said the Major, "will take all the responsibility. You have acted nobly, and I must tell you in the name of us all, Monsieur Zodomirsky, that you are a man of honor." Then, turning to the officers: "Let us go, gentlemen; we must inform the Colonel of what has passed."

We mounted into the carriages. As we did so we saw Stamm in the distance galloping up the mountainside from the village upon his horse. Zodomirsky's eyes followed him.

"I know not what presentiment torments me," he said, "but I wish his pistol had been loaded, and that he had fired."

He uttered a deep sigh, then shook his head, as if with that he could disperse his gloomy thoughts.

"Home," he called to the driver.

We took the same route that we had come by, and consequently again passed Mariana Ravensky's window. Each of us looked up, but Mariana was no longer there.

"Captain," said Zodomirsky, "will you do me a service?"

"Whatever you wish," I replied.

"I count upon you to tell my poor Mariana the result of this miserable affair."

"I will do so. And when?"

"Now. The sooner the better. Stop!" cried Zodomirsky to the coachman. He stopped, and I descended, and the carriage drove on.

Zodomirsky had hardly entered when he saw me appear in the doorway of the saloon. Without doubt my face was pale, and wore a look of consternation, for Zodomirsky sprang toward me, crying:

"Great heavens, Captain! What has happened?"

I drew him from the saloon.

"My poor friend, haste, if you wish to see Mariana alive. She was at her window; she saw Stamm gallop past. Stamm being alive, it followed that you were dead. She uttered a cry, and fell. From that moment she has never opened her eyes."

"Oh, my presentiments!" cried Zodomirsky, "my presentiments!" and he rushed hatless and without his saber into the street.

On the staircase of Mademoiselle Ravensky's house he met the doctor, who was coming down.

"Doctor," he cried, stopping him, "she is better, is she not?"

"Yes," he answered, "better, because she suffers no more."

"Dead!" murmured Zodomirsky, growing white, and supporting himself against the wall. "Dead!"

"I always told her, poor girl! that, having a weak heart, she must avoid all emotion—"

But Zodomirsky had ceased to listen. He sprang up the steps, crossed the hall and the saloon, calling like a madman:

"Mariana! Mariana!"

At the door of the sleeping chamber stood Mariana's old nurse, who tried to bar his progress. He pushed by her, and entered the room.

Mariana was lying motionless and pale upon her bed. Her face was calm as if she slept. Zodomirsky threw himself upon his knees by the bedside, and seized her hand. It was cold, and in it was clenched a curl of black hair.

"My hair!" cried Zodomirsky, bursting into sobs. "Yes, yours," said the old nurse, "your hair that she cut off herself on quitting you at St. Petersburg. I have often told her it would bring misfortune to one of you."

If anyone desires to learn what became of Zodomirsky, let him inquire for Brother Vassili, at the Monastery of Troitza.

The holy brothers will show the visitor his tomb. They know neither his real name nor the causes which, at twenty-six, had made him take the robe of a monk. Only they say, vaguely, that it was after a great sorrow, caused by the death of a woman whom he loved.

The Sealed Orders

BY ALFRED DE VIGNY

(*1799-1863*)

THE great road leading from Artois into Flanders is long and melancholy enough; it extends in one undeviating straight line over a bed of stiff yellow clay, and through wide extending downs, unbroken by tree, hedge, or ditch, on either side.

It so happened, in the month of March 1815, that I was travelling upon this road, and I there met with an adventure which I have not since found it easy to forget.

I was on horseback, and alone; wrapped in my heavy military cloak; my black helmet upon my head, my pistols in my belt, and my large sabre by my side. It had been raining pitilessly, and without intermission, for four whole days and nights; and yet, in spite of it all, I dashed along, and was singing, as I remember, a gay French song.

I was young enough then!

La Maison du Roi in 1814 was, in fact, almost entirely composed of old grey-beards or mere children—the empire had consumed all the men.

My comrades were marching before me, somewhat in advance; following the king, Louis the Eighteenth, as he slowly retired to the frontiers, before the triumphant return of his great rival: their white cloaks and scarlet uniforms might still be perceived on the horizon, as they slowly plodded their way through the mud and rain; while on the extreme verge of the distance behind me, the lancers of Napoleon were beginning to make their appearance, hovering on our rear, their streaming tri-coloured pennons flaunting from time to time upon the air. My horse had cast a shoe, so that I had fallen some little way behind my companions; but he was young and powerful, and I urged him along at a high dashing trot, thinking it was time to be rejoining my company. I gaily breasted the pelting rain, the iron sheath of my good

sword rattled against my booted heel; I put my hand to my belt, it was well stuffed with gold Napoleons; I was young, ardent, happy—a mere boy, yet a soldier; what on earth could I desire more?

It continued, however, to rain pitilessly and unremittingly, and for some time I continued to sing as perseveringly; but at last I got weary of hearing no sound but my own voice, the ceaseless pattering of the rain, and the plashing of my horse's feet, as he struggled through the sludge and clay. My song gradually sank into silence; I paused, and listened—no sound but the ceaseless drip and patter of the rain, and the plash, plunge, and struggle of the determined animal! The road became deeper and deeper, the clay stiffer and more tenacious, at every step the plunges and efforts of the poor animal more heavy and violent. At last we were forced both of us fairly to give it up, and continue our journey at a foot's pace.

My large military boots were speedily crusted over with a thick sticky clay, as yellow as ochre, while the rain poured into them as if they had been buckets. I looked at my epaulettes—my pride and consolation in every disaster; alas! huge drops were falling from the rich gold lace, its glories already dingy and tarnished—this was the unkindest cut of all for a lad of sixteen. I began to look as dismal as the sky, and as crest-fallen as my poor horse, who, with dripping mane and drooping head, ploughed through the blinding rain and stiff clogging clay.

It was thus, that left to my own meditations, without a single object to divert my attention, I began, perhaps for the first time in my life, to reflect—to ask myself whither I was going?—and why?

I had no answer to give; and yet I soon reconciled my mind to this blank and utter ignorance. It was enough, my regiment was there before me, and where my regiment was, there it was my duty to be. This reflection at once satisfied my mind as far as the question regarded myself; and experiencing that delightful sense of repose which such satisfaction gives, I blessed the ineffable sentiment, that *sense of duty*, which produced it.

Continuing my ruminations—I began to reflect upon this sense of duty, and to ask myself in what it properly and really consisted.

And next, considering the numbers at that moment before me—heads wrinkled and grey with old age, or bright with the golden curls of eighteen; all alike enduring, with uncomplaining patience, fatigues and

hardships which, under other circumstances, would have been thought absolutely intolerable—men, who, with every prospect before them that could render life valuable, were risking it, without the slightest hesitation, and with the utmost *sang-froid,* merely from a sense of duty, I felt how large a share I might myself claim in that sentiment of composed submission which men feel when obeying implicitly the laws of honour and duty, and I began to think that this devotion, this abnegation of self, must be a much more universal matter than I had at first imagined.

I asked myself, whether this self-devotion were not, in fact, an innate sentiment—a part of ourselves—of the nature born with us; and from that I proceeded to inquire what the precise nature of this instinct, if instinct it were, might be; an instinct which seemed to urge mankind, as by a kind of necessity, to seek pleasure in obedience, and to feel a desire to depose, as it were, their free agency, and consequent responsibility, in other hands; as if thereby a burden was laid down too weighty to be voluntarily supported—and how this sensation of relief seemed to give a secret feeling of complacency, and a freedom to the act of obedience, which reconcile it to the pride of human nature.

I saw this powerful and mysterious instinct acting upon human society, and binding families and nations into immense and powerful bodies—but in no form of society did I see it exercising an influence so incalculable as upon our modern armies.—Nowhere is the renunciation of individual action, word, desire, almost thought, so complete as here.

I now paused, and began to follow out into its remote consequences this military self-abnegation; this unlimited obedience to orders, demonstrated by the unhesitating sacrifice of every individual feeling and opinion—and calling at times, for actions so entirely out of the usual line of proceeding.

Thus I mused and pondered, allowing my horse, meanwhile, to choose his own path and his own pace; the long undeviating way lengthening out in one unbroken line before me, neither house, tree, nor living object breaking the melancholy plain which stretched to the horizon.

The road traversed this dusky landscape, like a long, narrow yellow stripe, upon a blackish, greenish, grey ground; only varied, where the clay had melted into an actual morass, by splashes of liquid mud gleaming at a distance in that cold watery light, which severed at intervals the heavy wandering clouds

I was looking along this stripe of yellow road, with a sort of vague hope to see an object of some sort or other which might break the intolerable monotony, when about a quarter of a league in advance I discovered, what appeared to me a small dark point, slowly travelling along it in the same direction as myself. Even this object, trifling as it might be, was some little relief in the dismal solitude around me; and I continued to watch its progress, as the little black point kept moving before me in the direction of Lille, in that sort of zig-zag irregular manner which bespeaks ways heavy and difficult.

I now pressed my horse forward, and gained upon the object; and the road mending a little, put him upon a trot, which soon brought me near enough to discover it to be a small covered cart. I was hungry and thirsty, so thinking it a sutler's cart, I made all sail for this fortunate island in the desert; but, arrived within a hundred yards, I perceived my mistake; it was no sutler's equipage.

A little cart of white wood, covered with three wooden hoops, over which was stretched a piece of black oil-cloth, was swinging on springs like a cradle, between two large wheels, at that moment axle-deep in mud; and was drawn painfully along by a white mule, which went staggering and straining through the mire. A man on foot walked upon one side of this little carriage.

The man was a large, strongly-built, military man; he might be about fifty years of age; his back a little rounded, as may be observed in old infantry officers who have in their time carried the knapsack; his hair and moustaches grey. His uniform and the epaulette of a *chéf-de-bataillon* were visible under a short threadbare blue cloak which he wore. His countenance was severe, but had an air of goodness in it—the true expression of the old soldier's face. He looked askance at me as I rode up, and drawing a musket briskly out of the cart, presented it, passing at the time to the other side of the mule, as if to put his beast between us. I had observed that he wore the white cockade, so I contented myself with merely lifting up my arm and displaying my scarlet uniform; upon which he replaced his musket, saying—

"Right!—I took you for one of those greyhounds there, behind us.—Will you drink?"

He had a cocoa-nut, mounted in silver, hanging round his neck, in which, by-the-by, he seemed to take some little pride; he presented it

to me, and I swallowed a few mouthfuls of very ordinary white wine, with very extraordinary pleasure.

Having returned him his cocoa-nut:—

"To the King's health!" said he, pledging me—"It has seemed good to his Majesty to make me a chevalier of the Legion of Honour, so I can do no less than conduct him to the frontiers. That done, as I have no bread-winner but my sword, I shall return to my battalion—'tis my duty."

And having said this rather in the way of a soliloquy than as addressing me, he gave his poor white mule a poke, adding, that he had no time to lose; and I being much of the same opinion, resumed my march at the same time, and followed three or four paces in the rear.

I kept examining him in silence. I hate questionings and questioners; and so we continued our advance for some little time, without speaking, till having made about a quarter of a league, he stopped to allow his poor little staggering mule to take breath; and I did the same for the sake of my horse; trying as I did so, to squeeze the water out of my large military boots, which were literally brimming over.

"Your boots are like sponges," said he.

"They have not been off my legs these four nights!"

"Bah! And in eight more much you will care about that. It's a fine thing in these days to have only one's self to look to. Do you know what I have got in that thing there?"

"No."

"A woman!"

"So, ho!" was all I said, quietly enough, and resumed my march at a foot pace; he following with his little cart and mule.

Presently he resumed:

"This little cart did not cost me much, nor the poor beast neither; but they do my business well enough—though the road is none of the best."

That was true indeed; and I stopped here, and offered him a turn upon my horse. The offer was made in sincerity; and he, seeing that it was so, and that I did not seem disposed to amuse myself at the expense either of him or his equipage—a little fear of ridicule having evidently embarrassed him at first—seemed suddenly set at his ease, and coming up to my stirrups, he struck me slightly on the knee, saying—

"I see you are a good fellow after all, though you are one of the lobsters."

Something in the tone with which he thus alluded to the four "red companies" betrayed the bitterness with which the army in general regarded the privileges of these favoured regiments.

"However," he continued, "I will not trouble your horse, for one good reason among others, that I don't know how to ride—horsemanship not being my business."

"How so?—Officers of your rank are mounted."

"Bah!—Once a year, and upon a hired horse; but I am a seaman, if the truth must out. A sailor turned into a foot soldier! What business should I have on horseback?"

And having said this, he walked on silently a few paces, eyeing me askance, as if he expected to be questioned; but I, pursuing my way, and nothing coming, he resumed his discourse of himself.

"You are not particularly curious, I see. What I said just now must have surprised you rather."

"I am not easily surprised."

"Oh! that's it, is it? But I fancy, if I were to tell you why I left the navy, you *might* be surprised for once in a way."

"Well! and why should you not? It might serve to keep you warm, and make me forget this rain, which pelts in at my collar and runs out at my heels."

The old officer now seemed to prepare himself for a recital with great solemnity and gravity, like a child commencing some most important narration. He took off his schako, which was covered with oil-cloth, shook it, replaced it—gave that peculiar twitch of the shoulder which marks the man who has served in the infantry, and risen from the ranks. He then put his cocoa-flagon to his mouth, swallowed two or three drops, gave his little mule an encouraging kick under the ribs, and thus began.

"In the first place, you must know, young man, that I was born at Brest. I began by gaining my half ration as *enfant de troupe*, my father being a lifeguardsman. This lasted till I was nine years old—but I loved the sea; so, one fine night, while we were quartered at Brest, I hid myself in the hold of a merchant vessel bound for the Indies, and when she had lost sight of land, lo! and behold! there was I. The

captain had his choice, either to fling me overboard or make a ship's boy of me: he chose the latter, so cabin-boy I became.

"Before the Revolution broke out, I had made my way; and by that time I had become captain in my turn—master of a smart little merchant vessel—having been then at sea about fifteen years—the *Ex-marine royale*—a good marine that, faith! after all. Well as the *Ex-marine royale* happened in those days—you know why—to be rather short of officers, they picked up commanders how and where they could—here and there, among merchant ships—anywhere, as they came to hand. I had had one or two pretty smart affairs with smugglers—I'll tell you about that some other time, so they picked me up among the rest, and gave me the command of a brig of war named the *Marat*.

"It was on a certain day, the 28th Fructidor, 1797, that I received orders to put myself in readiness to sail for Cayenne. I was to transport sixty soldiers, and a *déporté*, one remaining out of one hundred and ninety-three which the frigate *la Decade* had taken on board a few days before. I had orders to treat this individual well, and the letter I received from the Directory upon the subject enclosed another sealed with three red seals—the centre one being of a most extravagant size—which I was not to open until we made the first degree north latitude, between 27° and 28° west longitude; that is, just before we should be about to cross the line.

"The letter was a great long packet, so well closed upon every side that it was impossible to catch the slightest glimpse of its contents. It was, as I said, a long, thin, scrawling-looking letter, with three red seals. I am not naturally superstitious, but there was something in the look of the letter that I did not altogether like, though I could give no reason why—however, I carried it into my cabin, and stuck it under the glass of a little shabby English clock, which was fastened above my bed.

"This bed was a true sea-bed—you know the sort of thing—no, no, you are only sixteen, you have seen nothing as yet—you know nothing about the matter.

"Well, without boasting then, nothing on earth—a queen's bed-chamber even, is not neater or nicer than a seaman's cabin. Everything in its place—a hook or a nail for everything! The vessel rolls like a dolphin—nothing rolls out of order. The lockers fit into the sides of the cabin—not an inch is lost. My bed was a chest, when it

was open I slept in it, when it was shut I sat or lay upon it; it was my sofa—I lay upon it and smoked my pipe—sometimes my table—and then people sat upon two little round stools that were in my cabin. Oh! that cabin was a perfect baby-house—and my brig such a pretty thing too! We made it out well enough within her; the voyage would have been pretty pleasant but for—

"However, we had a fair wind, N.N.W. and I was busy fixing my letter under my clock glass, when who should come into my cabin but my *déporté,* for the first time. He had a pretty little creature hanging upon his arm, might be seventeen years old or thereabouts. As for him, he was, as he told me afterwards, upwards of nineteen; a fine young fellow, rather pale—too pale, mayhap, for a man—but he *was* a man, nevertheless, and a man who knew as well what it became a man to do upon occasion as many more daring-looking fellows.

"You shall hear. Well, he had, as I said, his little wife hanging upon his arm—pretty! pretty creature!—young, merry, and pretty as a little bird: they looked, indeed, like a pair of turtle-doves; it was a pleasure to see them together; so I turned and I said—

" 'Well, my young ones, so ye are come to pay your respects to the old captain, are ye? That's very pretty, I must say, of ye both. I am going to carry you a long journey—so much the better, we shall have time enough to get acquainted—I am sorry to receive Madame in this mess, but you see I was nailing up this great beast of a letter. Will you be pleased to lend a hand?'

"They were such dear little things! The young fellow took the hammer, and the little wife the nails, handing them as I wanted them; she laughing and crying out, 'Now this way, Captain,—now a little that way, Captain—now a little to the right—now a bit to the left.' Making game of me because the vessel swung me to and fro, and I could not rightly fix the letter. I think I see her now—with her sweet little smiling eyes, and her merry voice—'This way, Captain—no; that way, Captain—a little to the left—a bit to the right.'

"She was making a fool of me all the time.

" 'Ah! you little wicked thing,' said I, 'I'll get you well scolded by your husband, that I will.' And then she sprang up, and flung her pretty arms round his neck.

"They *were* sweet creatures! that's the truth—and in this way our acquaintance began, and we were soon excellent friends.

"We had a prosperous voyage; the weather was charming, and I had never had such pretty company on board with me before. I made my lovers dine with me every day. It amused me to watch them.

"When we had dined—maybe on nothing but salt fish and biscuit—the young fellow and his little wife would sit gazing, gazing upon each other, as if it were the first time they had ever met in their lives—and I would laugh and make fun of them. Then they would laugh at themselves. We used to laugh like three fools at nothing at all. But it was enough to make a cat laugh to see how they loved one another.

"Everything was as it should be—nothing came amiss to them; they had nothing better than the common ship-fare, and that in those days was poor enough—little cared they. I used to give them a little drop of cherry brandy as a treat, when they dined with me—half a glass or so—just to sweeten their mouths—that was all they ever got. They had no better bed than their hammock, and they rolled together like these two pears which you see in my wet pocket-handkerchief. But they were always cheerful and contented. I was like you, I asked no questions—what mattered their names or their history to me? I had nothing to do with that—I a mere sailor—nothing but to carry them safe over the wave, like two birds of paradise as they were.

"Before a month had passed over our heads, I looked upon them as if they had been my own children. Every morning I used to call them into my cabin. The young fellow would sit writing at my table, that is to say, at my chest, which was my bed. He would often help me with my reckoning, and soon learned to do it better than I could. I was astonished at him. His young wife would sit upon one of the round stools in my cabin, working at her needle.

"One day we were all three sitting in this way, and I said, 'Do you know, my young ones, as it seems to me, we make a very pretty family picture here? Mind, I don't mean to ask questions—but, maybe, you have not much money to spare, and you are, both of you, as I think, a deuced deal too pretty and too delicate, to dig and delve in the burning sun of Cayenne, like many a poor devil of a *déporté* before you. It's a bad country—a bad country, take my word for it. I who have roughed it through sun and wind till I have the skin of a crocodile, might do well enough there—faith, I should live like a lord! So if you should happen to have—mind, I ask no questions—but if you should chance to have a bit of foolish friendship for your poor old captain here,

why I'll tell you what I'll do; I'll get rid of this old brig—she's not much better than a wooden shoe after all—so I'll get rid of her as fast as I can—and I'll settle myself down there with you, if you like. You see I have not a soul in the living world to care for, or that cares for me. I want relations—I want a home—I want a family. I should like to make a family and a home with you, my pretty young ones. You see I might serve you in many ways—I've got something pretty in that old chest there; we should have wherewith to make a good fight of it; and when the old fellow was under the moulds, as they say, you know all that was left would be for you and yours. Well, what say ye?'

"They said nothing at all, but kept looking first at each other, and then at me—and then at each other again—almost as if they doubted whether they heard me rightly. At last the young one—it was what she often did—flew like a little bird, as she was, and flinging her arms around the neck of the other, threw herself upon his knee, all red and blubbering like a little child. He pressed her in his arms, and the tears stood in his eyes too, but he held out his hand to me, looking still paler than usual. She kept muttering and murmuring to him in a low voice, while her fair silken hair, which hung down in long, floating curls, as it was the fashion to wear it then, fell all over his breast and shoulders—if you had seen them!—It was like a flood of gold showered over him. Well, for some time they kept murmuring to one another in a low voice; he kissing her from time to time on the forehead, and she crying like—at last I could stand it no longer, so I said—

"'Well, well!—will you never have done? What's it all about?'

"'But—but, Captain,' said the young fellow at last, 'you are too good. But—but—you cannot make a family and a home with *déportés,*' and he looked down.

"'Can't!' cried I; 'why not? I don't know what you have done to be *déportés,* and I don't care neither—you may tell me all about it some day, or let it alone, just as you like. You don't look to me like a fellow with a very heavy load upon his conscience—I wish everybody else may have as little to answer for, that's all. Come, come, take courage—but yet let us understand one another—while I have the keeping of you, you must expect no favours from me; and if you were to try to fly away, I would wring both your necks just as readily as if ye were two pigeons. Ay, but I would though. But once let me

be fairly rid of my epaulettes, and I know neither admiral nor Directory—I am my own man again then.'

" 'But,' said the young gentleman, shaking his brown hair, which was slightly powdered, as was the fashion of the time, 'I fear, Captain, it might be disadvantageous, nay, dangerous for you, to seem to know us or take interest in us. We laugh—for we are both of us young and giddy; we look happy, because we love one another a little—but I own it goes hard enough with me at moments, when I think of the future—and of what will become of my poor Laure—'

"He pressed the head of his young wife against his bosom: 'That was what you wished to have said, is it not, my dearest? Is not that what you meant to say too?'

"I had recourse to my pipe; I felt an odd swelling in my throat, and my eyes were twinkling.

" 'Come, come,' I said, 'we shall see. If the pipe incommodes Madame, let her go away.'

"She got up; her pretty face all red, and blurred over with her tears, like a child that had been crying.

" 'But,' said she, rallying like, and looking more cheerfully as she turned to the clock, but—'you neither of you ever seem to look at the letter.'

"I felt a strange creeping come over my flesh as she said this; I felt a strange, odd sensation, like pain in every hair of my head.

" 'The deuce,' said I, 'I had almost forgotten it; that would have been a pretty commence—suppose we had passed the first degree—I should have had nothing left for it but to throw myself overboard. It is lucky enough, child, that you recollected that great beast of a letter.'

"I went directly to my chart, to look where we were. I found we had a week before us at least; it was a great relief. Yet my heart was heavy; I could not tell why.

" 'The Directory does not understand trifling,' thought I. 'It's deuced lucky it's not too late—I really had forgotten all about it.'

"Well, sir, there we stood, all three of us, looking up at the letter, as if it could have spoken to us. As it happened, the sun was shining full upon the glass of the clock-case, and fell upon the great staring red seal of the letter; I could not help fancying it looked something like

a great big monster, an ogre's face, grinning from the middle of the fire; it looked horrid!

"'Could not one fancy,' said I, to make them laugh, 'its great big eyes were starting out of its head?'

"'Ah, my love!' said the wife, 'it looks like blood!'

"'Pooh, pooh!' said her husband, taking her arm under his; 'it looks like a letter of invitation to a wedding. Come, come! let the letter alone; it's time to go to bed.'

"And away they went. They went upon deck, and left me alone with this great beast of a letter. I remember that I kept looking at it as I smoked my pipe; it seemed to fix its great red eyes upon mine, fascinating like the eyes of a serpent. Its great long face, its third seal just in the middle, larger than the two others—red, wide, raw, staring like the maw of a fierce wolf! I could not endure the sight of it. I took my great-coat, and hung it over both clock and letter; I went upon deck to finish my pipe.

"We were in the latitude of the Cape de Verd islands; the *Marat* was running before a fair wind, at the rate of ten knots an hour. It was a splendid tropical night—the stars bright, large, and shining; the moon rising upon the horizon big as a sun of silver, the line of the ocean parting it, and a long stream of pale shimmering light falling upon the waves, which, as they broke, sparkled like diamonds: I sat upon deck smoking my pipe and looking at them.

"All was quite still, except the footfall of the officer on watch, as he paced the deck; gazing, as I did, upon the shadow of the vessel, stealing over the silent waters.

"I love silence and order—I hate noise, and I hate confusion. The lights should all have been extinguished by this time; but when I looked upon the deck, I thought I saw a little red line of light just below my feet. At another time and place this would have made me angry; but knowing the light came from the cabin of my little *déportés*, I determined to see what they were about.

"I had only to look down; I could see into the cabin through the skylight.

"The young girl was upon her knees; she was saying her prayers. A lamp swinging from the ceiling lighted the room. She had on a long white night-dress, and her fair golden shining hair floated over her shoulders, and almost touched two little bare feet, which were peeping

from under her white dress! so pretty—I was turning away; but pshaw! said I, an old soldier! What matters it? So I stayed.

"The husband was sitting upon a little trunk, his head resting between his hands, looking at her as she prayed. She raised her face to heaven, and then I saw that her large blue eyes were filled with tears. She looked like a Magdalene, that she did! He took up the end of her long hair, and silently pressed it to his lips.

"When she had done, she made the sign of the cross, smiling so softly—like an angel of heaven, as she was—I saw he made the sign of the cross too, half as if he were ashamed of himself—it was droll enough to see a man do it at all in those days, was not it? Then she rose from her knees, and he kissed her, and lifting her in his arms, laid her in her cot, just as a nurse lays a little baby in its cradle. It was dreadfully hot, and the swinging motion of the cot seemed to please her; and there she lay, her little bare feet crossed, her long white night-dress folded round her, swinging, swinging, and looking as if she were smiling herself to sleep, just like a rosy innocent child, pretty, pretty creature! At last, half-asleep herself, she said—

" 'Are you not sleepy? what are you thinking about? Why do you keep sitting there, my love?'

"He was still sitting, with his head resting upon his hands, and he made no answer. The good little thing seemed uneasy at this, and she stretched her pretty head out of the hammock—like a bird peering out of its nest, and looked at him, her little cherry lips half open, but seeming afraid to disturb him by saying more; at last, he said—

" 'Ah! my sweet Laure, as we approach America I cannot help being anxious—I do not know why—but I feel that this voyage has been the happiest part of our lives.'

" 'So it seems to me,' said she; 'and I wish it could but last for ever.'

"He glanced up at her, suddenly clasping his hands in a transport of love and affection that is quite indescribable: 'And yet, my angel—you cannot help crying when you say your prayers, and that goes to my heart—for I know what you are thinking of—and then—I fear you must repent of what you have done—'

" 'Repent!' said she, looking very sorry: 'Repent! Repent having come with *you!* What! do you think that because I had been yours only such a very, very short time that I should not love you? Was I not your wife? Has a wife no duties to perform because she is only

seventeen? Does that make the difference? Did not my mother herself, did not my sisters say, that I ought to go with you to Guiana? Did they see anything very wonderful in that? I only wonder you think so much about it, my love; it was so natural that I should come with you. How can you be sorry that I should be with you—to live with you, if you are to live, and to die with you, if you are to die?'

"She said this with such a tone, so low, so soft, so kind; it was like the sweetest music you ever heard in your whole life. I was quite affected. I said to myself—'You good little thing!'

"The young man began to sigh, striking the floor impatiently with his feet, while he kissed repeatedly the little hand and arm which she was holding out.

" 'Ah, Laurette! my Laurette! When I think that if our marriage had only been delayed four days—only four days! that then I should have been arrested and transported alone—I cannot forgive myself.'

"At this the little one leaned out of her hammock, stretched out her pretty white arms, clasped his head, pressed his forehead, his hair, his eyes, smiling like a cherub, and murmuring all sorts of little fond woman's things—I never saw anything so pretty in my whole life. Then she shut his mouth with her pretty soft fingers, and she said, while she took her long hair and wiped his eyes with it—

" 'But is it not much better to have your little wife with you? I am sure I like going to Cayenne very much—I shall like to see savages, and have cocoa-nut trees, like Paul and Virginia—we shall each of us plant one, and water it, and see which grows the fastest—and we will build a little hut, and I will work day and night for you, if you like—I am a very, very strong little thing; look, what stout little arms I have got; you see I can almost lift you, don't laugh. I can work and embroider; and there will be a town, and they will want embroidery; and then I can teach music and drawing; and if they know how to read, you can write books, you know.'

"I remember the poor young fellow seemed to wince at this last, as if he were in great pain, and he cried out in a piteous voice, 'Write! write!'

"And then he pressed the clenched fist of one hand, with violence, against the palm of the other.

" 'Ah! write! Why did I ever write? What business had I to write? Write! It is the vocation of a fool—I believed in their liberty

of the press—was I mad?—and what did I write for—to publish half-a-dozen commonplace notions, to be read by those who thought as I did, to be flung at the back of the fire by those who did not—of no use on earth but to injure myself. Myself! little matter—but thou, my angel! my sweet, beautiful, beautiful angel! My wife of four days, what hadst thou done? Tell me, how could I have the heart to let thee do it? How could I suffer it? Thou dost not even know, poor little thing, whither thou art going. Dost thou know, poor child, that thou wilt be sixteen hundred leagues from thy mother and sisters? And all for my sake—my sake!'

"She hid her head one moment in her pillow—and I who was above could see that she was crying, but he from below could not see her face; and when she uncovered it again, she was smiling to make him smile—and she said—

" 'And, besides, we are so excessively rich—Look!' said she, bursting out laughing, 'Look at my purse! my whole worldly treasure—one gold louis-d'or—all my worldly wealth!'

"He began to laugh too.

" 'By heaven! and I have spent my last half-crown—I gave it to the fellow who carried your trunks on board.'

" 'Ah, pooh!' cried she; 'what matters it?' clicking her white fingers like castanets; 'nobody so merry as those who have nothing at all! besides, I have my two diamond rings that my mother gave me, they are good for something, all the world over—we can sell them when you like—and besides, I am sure that good, worthy captain means kindly by us—and I suspect that he knows very well what's in the letter. It is a recommendation to the Governor of Cayenne.'

" 'Perhaps,' said he; 'who knows?'

" 'To be sure it is,' continued the little wife. 'You are so good—I am sure the government has only banished you for a short time—they can have no feeling against you.'

"This seemed so probable—and, pretty creature! calling me that good, worthy captain—I was quite touched. I began, too, to hope that she had guessed rightly; however it was time the light should be put out, so I struck the deck with my foot, and said, 'Hallo! my young ones, fire and candle out— Put out your lamp, if you please.'

"They blew out their lamp; and I heard them afterwards laughing and chattering in their hammock, like two little school-fellows, while

I continued to walk the deck smoking my pipe. All the stars of the tropics were at their posts, large as moons, the wind was blowing softly; how quiet and beautiful everything seemed that night!

"As I walked I kept reflecting, that in all probability the dear little thing had, indeed, guessed rightly. It was very likely that one of the five directors might have thought twice, and recommended this poor young fellow to me—I did not, indeed, quite comprehend why—but I never attempt to understand their fine state affairs; and in short, I began to think it might very well be so, and pleased and happy the thought made me.

"I went into my cabin, lifted down my old coat, and looked again at the letter. It had quite a different appearance—the great mouth seemed to smile, the seals looked like roses, and I gave it a friendly nod. Yet I hung my coat over it again. After all, I was as well pleased not to see it.—However, we thought no more about the matter, and we seemed as merry as ever; but as we approached the Line, we began, some of us, not to be quite so comfortable.

"One fine morning when I awakened, I was surprised not to feel the slightest motion of the vessel. I jumped up.

"Latitude, one degree north. Longitude, between 27° and 28° west.

"I went upon deck—the sea was as smooth as glass, the sails clinging idly round the masts.—It was a dead calm.—I looked askance at the letter, 'I shall have time enough to open thee,' I said.

"I waited until evening. I watched the sun slowly sinking into the ocean. Then it was necessary to break open the letter.

"I opened the clock-glass with a sharp, hasty, irritated sort of feeling —pulled out my sealed orders—

"Well, I held the paper in my hand a quarter of an hour, at least, before I could find courage to open it. At last, 'This is too absurd,' I said, and tore open the three seals. I remember that in doing so, I ground the large, red, grinning one with my thumb into a thousand pieces.

"I read the letter. I rubbed my eyes. I could not believe what I saw. I read the letter over again—I read it again—I began at the lowest line and read it backwards from one end to the other. I could not believe my senses—my knees knocked together. I sat down—I had a sort of cold feeling all over the skin of my face—I rubbed my cheeks

and the palms of my hands with rum—I despised myself for my weakness.

"At last I felt a little better: I went upon deck, and there they were.

"Laurette looked so excessively pretty at that moment that I dared not go near her. She had on a little simple white dress, the sleeves looped up, as they wore them then, her pretty white arms bare to the shoulders—her long fair hair curling round her. She was amusing herself with dipping her other gown, fastened at the end of a piece of cord, into the sea; and she was laughing as she tried to catch some of those bunches of tropical seaweed, which look so like bunches of grapes, and which float upon the surface of the waves.

" 'Grapes, grapes! who'll have some grapes?'

"Her lover was hanging over her—he did not look at the water, he was looking at her with inexpressible fondness.—I signed to the young man, to come to me upon the poop. She turned suddenly round; I do not know how I was looking, but she let fall her cord, and seizing him quickly by the arm, cried out—

" 'Don't go to him; see how pale he looks.'

"Like enough I looked pale!

"He came, however, to me upon the poop, while she remained gazing at us, leaning against the mast. We walked up and down for some time, in perfect silence, both of us. I smoked a cigar, but it seemed to stifle me, and I spat it out into the water, he watching me. At last I took hold of his arm, but I was choking, I give you my honour, I was actually choking.

"At last I said:

" 'Will you never tell me, young gentleman, what you did? Am I never to know what you did—to offend those rascally pettifoggers, sitting there in state like five scraps of one king? They seem to be devilishly enraged. It's a pretty business!'

"He shrugged his shoulders, and shook his head—so gently—poor fellow! and then he said—

" 'No great thing, Captain. Three couplets of a burlesque on the Directory—neither more nor less.'

" 'Impossible!' cried I.

" 'Neither more nor less—and the couplets were wretched enough too. I was arrested on the 15th Fructidor, and carried to La Force—

tried the 16th—condemned to death—and the sentence mercifully remitted to deportation.'

"'It's a strange business,' repeated I. 'The Directory must consist of very susceptible gentlemen. For would you believe it? The order which I hold in my hand—is—is—is—an order—that you are to be—shot!'

"He made no reply, except by a slight smile.

"He preserved his composure wonderfully for a young fellow only nineteen. But he glanced at his young wife, and then he wiped two or three large drops from his forehead. As for me, my face was bathed with sweat, and my eyes were brimful.

"I went on.

"'It seems these good citizens did not choose to finish your business there. They thought it better to have it done a few leagues off. A little more out of sight, perhaps—but it is an ugly sight for the child! Yet I see no remedy. There is the sentence of death. Here is the order for execution signed, countersigned, sealed—nothing forgotten.

"He bowed politely, colouring a *very* little.

"'I ask nothing, Captain!' he said, with his usual gentle tone of voice; 'no man can be expected to swerve from his duty. I only wish to speak a few words to my Laure—and to entreat of you to take care of her, if she should survive me—but I hardly think she will.'

"'All that is but fair, my good fellow,' said I. 'If you wish it, I will carry her back to France—to her family—I will never leave her, till she wishes to be rid of me. But it is of no use talking of that—you need not flatter yourself. She will never recover this, poor little thing!'

"He took my hands in both his, and pressed them.

"'My excellent Captain, I see you suffer more than I do in this business—but there is no help for it. I trust you will preserve what little property of mine is left, for her sake—and that you will take care she gets possession of what her poor old mother may leave her. I trust to you to protect her life—her honour—and also to take care of her health. She is,' said he, lowering his voice, 'a delicate little creature—her chest is often affected; she must keep it warm; it must be well covered—always. In short, you will be father, mother, everything to her—I know you will—and if she *could* keep the two diamond rings her mother gave her, I should be glad—but, of course, if the money is wanted, they must go. My poor Laurette—how pretty she looks!'

"It was rather too much for me—I could hardly stand it; so I began to knit my brows. I had spoken as lightly as I could, to keep up my own spirits, but I could bear it no longer.

" 'One word is as good as a thousand,' said I. 'We understand one another—go to her.'

"I squeezed his hand; he looked wistfully at me; and I said, 'Stay a moment—let me give you a word of advice. Don't say a word to her about it. We will settle the thing for her—be easy—that's my business. It shall all be managed in the best manner.'

" 'Ah!' said he, 'I did not understand—yes—much better. Besides, this leave-taking! this leave-taking!'

" 'Yes, yes,' said I; 'don't behave like a child—much better—much better. No leave-taking, if you can help it, or you are lost.'

"I wrung his hand, and he went away.

"It went hard enough with me too.

"It seems that he kept his secret. I saw them walking arm-in-arm upon the deck, for about a quarter of an hour; and then they went back to the place where the cord lay: one of the ship's boys had picked it out of the water.

"The night fell suddenly.

"This was the moment I had determined upon. But this moment—this one moment—it has been a moment that has lasted me for my life. I have carried it within me, like a musket-ball, ever since."

Here the old commander was obliged to pause. I was silent; what could I say?

He struck hard upon his breast, and went on.

"I tell you I cannot understand it yet; I felt myself in a rage, a bitter rage, my very finger-ends tingled. Yet something seemed to urge me on, and force me to obey.

"So I called an officer, and I said, 'Man a boat; and as we are to be murderers, put the little creature into it, and carry her out to sea: when you hear the volley, then you may come back again.'

"To obey a morsel of paper! for it was but a morsel of paper after all. Something in the very air must have driven me on. I saw him.

I saw the young man kneel down before his Laure—kiss her knees! her feet! her gown! Do you think it was terrible or not?

"I cried out like a madman—

" 'Part them! part them this instant! Part them—curse the republic —curse the Directory! the Directors! I quit the service! I care not for these accursed lawyers! You may tell them, if you will! I curse them all! what care I!'

"Ah! I cared little enough for them; I could have strangled them all five— Scoundrels! I care for them no more than I do for the rain that's now pouring down upon us—I defied them all! *My* poor life! Such a miserable wretch as I was! well—well—well!"

And his voice faltered—sunk by degrees—and he walked on in silence, biting his lips, while an expression of fierce, terrible anguish was upon his brows; his arm twitched with slight convulsions, and he struck his poor mule fiercely from time to time. His face had changed from its usual dark yellow to a deep cloudy red; he kept opening his waistcoat violently, as if he could hardly breathe—baring his breast to the wind and rain.

We proceeded some time in dead silence; at last, seeing he would say no more unless I spoke first, I said—"I understand," as if I thought his story ended. "After such an affair, a man detests his profession?"

"Oh! the profession! Are you mad?" said he, impatiently; "it is not the profession. Who ever heard of the captain of a brig of war being made into a common executioner? Never, except when there is a government of assassins and scoundrels, who take advantage of the habit a poor devil has of obeying orders—obeying like a blind idiot, like a piece of dead clockwork—in spite of himself."

And he took a red pocket-handkerchief out of his pocket, covered over his face, and began to cry like a child. I stopped a moment behind, as if to tighten my stirrups, and let him advance a few paces. I felt there was impropriety—a want of respect—in witnessing these floods of tears.

He understood my forbearance, as it would seem, for in about a quarter of an hour he came behind the little cart, and asked me whether I had any razors in my portmanteau. I only said that I had no razors —not having as yet a beard. It was a mere excuse to enter into conversation again, and I soon perceived that he returned to his story.

"You never saw a ship in your life?" he began.

"Only at the Panorama—and I should suppose I got no very accurate conception of one there."

"You don't know, then, what we call the *bossoir?*"

"Not in the least."

"It is a kind of terrace which projects from the head of the ship, and from which they heave anchor. When a man is to be shot—they put him there."

"That he may fall into the water?—I understand."

He made no answer, but went on to describe all the sorts of boats that can be conceived of, as belonging to a brig; and their different positions on board; and then, without any apparent connection in his ideas, he continued his story, with that air of affected indifference which men acquire in the service; because they are incessantly called upon to exhibit to their inferiors contempt of danger, contempt of human life, contempt of human nature; concealing, most often under this harsh exterior, a strong and acute sensibility.

The severity of a military man is like an iron mask over a noble countenance; a stone dungeon hiding an illustrious captive.

"These boats hold six men each. The boat was manned—they put her in—so softly, that she had not time to cry out, or to utter a word.

"There are things which a man never forgets—there are things which last a man his life. When a thing is done—it's fine talking—a man *never does forget*—

"How confoundedly it rains! What cursed weather! Why the devil did I begin to tell you this story! When I once begin I can't help it—I can't stop—I must come to an end—that history gets into my head—it makes me drunk—it's like brandy—what cursed weather—my cloak is like a wet blanket—

"I was telling you of that poor little Laurette, I think. Poor little thing! What stupid blockheads there are in the world. The officer was idiot enough to row towards the *head* of the vessel—and—one cannot think of everything at once, you know—I had calculated on the darkness of the night to cover the hellish business; I forgot the light of a dozen muskets firing at once—and so—and so—and so—Great God of heaven! She—she—from the boat! She—saw her husband fall into the water—

"God knows how the rest came to pass, but as sure as there is a God in heaven, what I am going to tell you is true.

"I know nothing about it—I never could make it out—but it is as true as that you sit there.

"The moment they fired she clapped her hand to her forehead, as if a ball had struck her, and then she sat down in the boat again; she neither fainted, nor cried out, nor spoke a word.

"She came back to the ship how they would—and as they would.

"I went to her; I spoke to her in the best way such a poor devil as I was able; she seemed to listen, for she looked me in the face, rubbing her forehead all the time, but she understood nothing.

Her forehead was red; the rest of her face was deadly pale, and she trembled in every joint, as if she was afraid of everybody.

"She has been in the same way ever since. She is just in the same way still. Poor little thing! Idiot—fool—mad—what you like—one never gets a word out of her, except now and then she complains of her head—

"From that moment I was as changed a creature as herself; something within me seemed to say, *Keep her by thee to the end of thy days, and take care of her.*

"And I have kept her.

"When I came back to France, I asked permission to pass without losing rank into the land service; I detested the sea; the sea! where I had shed innocent blood—I detested the very sight of it.

"I found out the family of poor Laure. Her mother was dead; her sisters, when they saw her condition, offered to send her to the hospital of Charenton; I turned my back upon them, and have kept her ever since.

"Would you like to see her? you may if you will. Hola!—whoa!"

He stopped his poor little mule, and lifting up one end of the dark oil-cloth which covered his little cart, as if he wanted to shake up the straw with which it was almost stuffed full, displayed the piteous spectacle.

Two large blue eyes, most beautiful, both in form and colour, but standing out, as it were, from a long head and pale thin face, almost buried in an immense profusion of long fair hair. It seemed, at first, as if nothing remained alive of this poor creature but these large blue eyes; the rest was dead. Her forehead was crimson, her cheeks hollow, and perfectly colourless, except round the eyes, where there was a circle of bluish black.

She had on a little blue cloak, tied round her neck, so that the rest of her dress could scarcely be seen; for she was crouching down in the straw, and little was visible of her figure except her two knees, on which she was playing by herself at dominoes.

She looked up at us—first trembled excessively, then smiled slightly, and returned to her play again. She seemed intent upon making her left hand victorious over her right.

"Do you see, she has been a whole month at that one game," said the commander. "Tomorrow, perhaps, it will be something else—droll, isn't it!"

And so saying, he took off his schako, which was dripping with the rain, and began to arrange the oilskin covering that was over it.

"Poor Laurette," said I, "thou hast lost thy game."

I brought my horse close up to the cart, and held out my hand; she gave me hers, mechanically as it seemed; smiling at the same time with the utmost softness. I remarked that the two diamond rings were still upon her long wasted fingers: I recollected the rings which her mother had given her, and wondered how in the midst of so much misery he had contrived to preserve them. But for the universe I would not have made the remark to the commander. His eyes, however, followed mine, and seeing them fixed upon the fingers, he said, with some little pride:

"Rather fine diamonds, hey? Something might have been got for them, but, poor child, I could not find in my heart to take them from her. She cried so if I only touched them. She held them fast, she will not part with them. In other things she is quiet enough. She never complains. Now and then she sews a little. I have kept my word to the poor young fellow, and have never repented that I passed it. I have never once been parted from her since. I carry her wherever I go. I give out that she is my daughter, and that she is queer. Everyone respects us both. Things can be more easily arranged following the army, than people at Paris imagine.

"She has made all our campaigns with the Emperor. I have always been able to carry her through—I always made a point of keeping her warm; it was easy enough in those days; she had a pretty, smart little carriage, and plenty of wrappers and straw. She was very comfortable, I assure you. I had good pay then; my pension of the Legion of Honour, and other odd things, so we were famously off. I wanted for nothing,

no more did she; I took quite a pleasure in it. It was pretty to see what a pet she was made of by all the officers of the 7th *Chevau-légers;* I assure you she was."

And then he went up to her, and tapped her gently upon the shoulder.

"Come, my dear, won't you say a little word or two to the lieutenant here? Come, come—just a little word, or a little nod—won't you?"

But she kept to her dominoes.

"Oh!" said he, "she is rather cross today because it rains; she cannot bear rain—yet she never catches cold—they say mad people never fall sick—that's lucky enough for her. At the Beresina, and the retreat from Moscow it was all the same. Well, well, dear, do as you please, then—mind your game; never heed us. Do just as you like, my pretty Laurette."

She took his hand, which lay upon her shoulder, a large black, wrinkled hand, and carrying it to her lips, kissed it.

This I could hardly stand, and turned my horse hastily away.

"Come," I cried, "shall we march? the night is coming on fast; we shall never be at Bethune."

He first took his sabre, and carefully scraped the yellow mud off his boots, then he mounted into the cart, and threw the hood of the little cloak which Laurette wore, over her head; then he took off his black silk cravat, and tied it carefully round the throat of his adopted daughter—shook up the straw, arranged it around her—descended—closed the oil-cloth accurately—gave his mule a kick, shrugged his shoulders, and continued his march.

It rained pitilessly, the heavens above one deep gloomy grey—the earth beneath wet, and dingy, the road muddy, and seemingly endless. In the west a dim, pale light broke through the dusky clouds, and just fell upon some windmills which terminated the horizon. We journeyed on in profound silence.

I looked at the old officer; he walked vigorously forwards, while his little mule struggled through the mire, and my poor horse with drooping head followed as best he might. From time to time the old soldier took off his schako, and wiped his bald front, and a few grey hairs which encircled his head, now, with his white moustaches, dripping with the rain, which fell into his bare unprotected neck.

He seemed quite indifferent as to the effect his story might have produced on me. He had not condescended to paint himself either as

better or worse than he really was. And at the end of about half-an-hour he began another long history of his campaign under Massena; how he had formed his battalion into a hollow square, a recital of which I heard little enough, though he became excited in the course of his narrative, which tended to demonstrate the superiority, upon some occasions, of infantry over cavalry.

The night came on; we slackened our pace; the mud seemed thicker and deeper than ever, the road more solitary and dreary. Nothing on either side—nothing in the horizon—no house, barn, or hedge!—we halted at last under a dead tree; the only tree of any description upon the road.

He then proceeded to make his arrangements for a bivouac.

He took his little mule out of the cart, and bestowed upon it his first attention. This done, he looked into his cart, as a mother looks into her infant's cradle, and I heard him say:

"Here, my dear, put this great-coat over your feet, and try to go to sleep. Come, all's right, she has not got a drop of rain—dry as a toast. Oh! the devil!—she has broken my watch all to pieces—my poor silver watch that I hung round her neck—Oh, my poor old watch!—Never mind it, dear child, try to go to sleep, the rain will soon be over. It's droll certainly, she always *is* in a fever—they say mad people always are. There, my dear, is a little bit of chocolate for you; it's very nice; —eat it and go to sleep: that's a good child."

He placed the cart under the tree, sheltering it as well as he could from the pelting rain; and then divided his own supper, which consisted of a morsel of dry bread, with me.

"I am sorry that I have nothing better to offer you," said he; "but it is at least as good as horse-flesh seasoned with gunpowder, which we were glad enough of in Russia. Poor little woman! you see, I must keep something a little nice for her; she must be served first, you know —she's as delicate and tender as a little child, always so nice and tidy too. She has never forgotten her old habits—that's droll, isn't it? hem!"

As he was speaking I heard her sigh, and say, in a plaintive voice—

"Take out the ball! Take out the ball!"

I rose to get further off.

"Sit down again," said he; "it's nothing at all—she is always saying

that because she thinks, you see, she has got the musket-ball in her head—but that does not prevent her doing anything I ask her—and always as sweetly and gently as possible."

I said no more; I began sorrowfully to calculate that from the year 1797 to 1815, it was eighteen years! Eighteen years that this man had passed in this manner! I remained for some time silent, pondering upon such a character, and upon such a fate. At last, *à propos de rien,* I stretched out my hand, took his, pinched it, and said:

"You are an excellent fellow."

He answered:

"Why?—what, on account of this poor little thing? But do you not see it was only my duty?"

And he began again to talk of Massena.

The next day we arrived at Bethune, a wretched little fortified place. There, all was in confusion; the inhabitants were pulling down their white flags, and sewing pieces of red, blue and white together, to hang out of their windows. The drums were beating *la générale,* the trumpets sounding to horse, by order of Monseigneur le Duc de Berri.

The long carts of Picardy were coming in, loaded with the *cent Suisses* and their baggage; the carriages of the Princes, cannon, squadrons blocking up the streets.

The sight of my comrades made me forget my friend and his little cart for a moment, for I lost sight of him in the crowd, and, to my great regret, could never meet with him again.

I remained long in ignorance of the fate of my poor *chef-de-bataillon,* for he had not even told me his name. One day, however, about the year 1825 I think it was, as I was waiting in a coffee-house till it was time for parade, I met with an old infantry officer, to whom I described him.

"Oh, *par Dieu!* my dear fellow, I knew the poor devil well—he was knocked on the head at Waterloo. True enough, he left among his baggage a sort of poor crazy girl—his daughter, they said—who knows? We put her into the hospital at Amiens, as we passed through to join the army of the Loire, but she went stark mad, and died in three days."

Long Odds

BY H. RIDER HAGGARD

(*1856-1925*)

The story which is narrated in the following pages came to me from the lips of my old friend Allan Quatermain, or Hunter Quatermain, as we used to call him in South Africa. He told it to me one evening when I was stopping with him at the place he bought in Yorkshire. Shortly after that, the death of his only son so unsettled him that he immediately left England, accompanied by two companions who were old fellow-voyagers of his, Sir Henry Curtis and Captain Good, and has now utterly vanished into the dark heart of Africa. He is persuaded that a white people, of which he has heard rumours all his life, exists somewhere on the highlands in the vast, still unexplored interior, and his great ambition is to find them before he dies. This is the wild quest upon which he and his companions have departed, and from which I shrewdly suspect they never will return. One letter only have I received from the old gentleman, dated from a mission station high up the Tana, a river on the east coast, about three hundred miles north of Zanzibar; in it he says they have gone through many hardships and adventures, but are alive and well, and have found traces which go far toward making him hope that the results of their wild quest may be a "magnificent and unexampled discovery." I greatly fear, however, that all he has discovered is death; for this letter came a long while ago, and nobody has heard a single word of the party since. They have totally vanished.

It was on the last evening of my stay at his house that he told the ensuing story to me and Captain Good, who was dining with him. He had eaten his dinner and drunk two or three glasses of old port, just to help Good and myself to the end of the second bottle. It was an unusual thing for him to do, for he was a most abstemious man, having conceived, as he used to say, a great horror of drink from observing

its effects upon the class of men—hunters, transport-riders, and others —among whom he had passed so many years of his life. Consequently the good wine took more effect on him than it would have done on most men, sending a little flush into his wrinkled cheeks, and making him talk more freely than usual.

Dear old man! I can see him now, as he went limping up and down the vestibule, with his gray hair sticking up in scrubbing-brush fashion, his shrivelled yellow face, and his large dark eyes, that were as keen as any hawk's and yet soft as a buck's. The whole room was hung with trophies of his numerous hunting expeditions, and he had some story about every one of them, if only you could get him to tell them. Generally he would not, for he was not very fond of narrating his own adventures, but tonight the port wine made him more communicative.

"Ah, you brute!" he said, stopping beneath an unusually large skull of a lion, which was fixed just over the mantelpiece, beneath a long row of guns, its jaws distended to their utmost width. "Ah, you brute! you have given me a lot of trouble for the last dozen years, and will, I suppose, to my dying day."

"Tell us the yarn, Quatermain," said Good. "You have often promised to tell me, and you never have."

"You had better not ask me to," he answered, "for it is a longish one."

"All right," I said, "the evening is young and there is some more port."

Thus adjured, he filled his pipe from a jar of coarse-cut Boer tobacco that was always standing on the mantelpiece, and, still walking up and down the room began:

"It was, I think, in the March of '69 that I was up in Sikukuni's country. It was just after old Sequati's time, and Sikukuni had got into power—I forget how. Anyway, I was there. I had heard that the Bapedi people had got down an enormous quantity of ivory from the interior, and so I started with a waggon-load of goods, and came straight away from Middelburg to try and trade some of it. It was a risky thing to go into the country so early, on account of the fever; but I knew that there were one or two others after that lot of ivory, so I determined to have a try for it, and take my chance of fever. I had got so tough from continual knocking about that I did not set

it down at much. Well, I got on all right for a while. It is a wonderfully beautiful piece of bush veldt, with great ranges of mountains running through it, and round granite koppies starting up here and there, looking out like sentinels over the rolling waste of bush. But it is very hot,—hot as a stew-pan,—and when I was there that March, which, of course, is autumn in that part of Africa, the whole place reeked of fever. Every morning, as I trekked along down by the Oliphant River, I used to creep out of the waggon at dawn and look out. But there was no river to be seen—only a long line of billows of what looked like the finest cotton-wool tossed up lightly with a pitchfork. It was the fever-mist. Out from among the scrub, too, came little spirals of vapour, as though there were hundreds of tiny fires alight in it—reek rising from thousands of tons of rotting vegetation. It was a beautiful place, but the beauty was the beauty of death; and all those lines and blots of vapour wrote one great word across the surface of the country, and that word was 'fever.'

"It was a dreadful year of illness that. I came, I remember, to one little kraal of knobnoses, and went up to it to see if I could get some *maas* (curdled buttermilk) and a few mealies. As I got near I was struck with the silence of the place. No children began to chatter, and no dogs barked. Nor could I see any native sheep or cattle. The place, though it had evidently been recently inhabited, was as still as the bush round it, and some guinea-fowl got up out of the prickly-pear bushes right at the kraal gate. I remember that I hesitated a little before going in, there was such an air of desolation about the spot. Nature never looks desolate when man has not yet laid his hand upon her breast; she is only lovely. But when man has been, and has passed away, then she looks desolate.

"Well, I passed into the kraal, and went up to the principal hut. In front of the hut was something with an old sheepskin *kaross* (rug) thrown over it. I stooped down and drew off the rug, and then shrank back amazed, for under it was the body of a young woman recently dead. For a moment I thought of turning back, but my curiosity overcame me; so, going past the woman, I went down on my hands and knees and crept into the hut. It was so dark that I could not see anything, though I could smell a great deal; so I lit a match. It was a 'tandstickor' match and burned slowly and dimly, and as the light gradually increased I made out what I thought was a lot of people,

men, women, and children, fast asleep. Presently it burned up brightly, and I saw that they too, five of them altogether, were quite dead. One was a baby. I dropped the match in a hurry, and was making my way out of the hut as hard as I could go, when I caught sight of two bright eyes staring out of a corner. Thinking it was a wildcat, or some such animal, I redoubled my haste, when suddenly a voice near the eyes began first to mutter, and then to send up a succession of awful yells. Hastily I lit another match, and perceived that the eyes belonged to an old woman, wrapped up in a greasy leather garment. Taking her by the arm, I dragged her out, for she could not, or would not, come by herself, and the stench was overpowering me. Such a sight as she was—a bag of bones, covered over with black, shrivelled parchment. The only white thing about her was her wool, and she seemed to be pretty well dead except for her eyes and her voice. She thought that I was a devil come to take her, and that was why she yelled so. Well, I got her down to the waggon, and gave her a 'tot' of Cape smoke, and then, as soon as it was ready, poured about a pint of beef-tea down her throat, made from the flesh of a blue vilder-beeste I had killed the day before, and after that she brightened up wonderfully. She could talk Zulu,—indeed, it turned out that she had run away from Zululand in T'Chaka's time,—and she told me that all the people that I had seen had died of fever. When they had died, the other inhabitants of the kraal had taken the cattle and gone away, leaving the poor old woman, who was helpless from age and infirmity, to perish of starvation or disease, as the case might be. She had been sitting there for three days among the bodies when I found her. I took her on to the next kraal, and gave the head man a blanket to look after her, promising him another if I found her well when I came back. I remember that he was much astonished at my parting with two blankets for the sake of such a worthless old creature. Why did I not leave her in the bush? he asked. Those people carry the doctrine of the survival of the fittest to its extreme, you see.

"It was the night after I had got rid of the old woman that I made my first acquaintance with my friend yonder," and he nodded toward the skull that seemed to be grinning down at us in the shadow of the wide mantel-shelf. "I had trekked from dawn till eleven o'clock,—a long trek,—but I wanted to get on; and then had the oxen turned out to graze, sending the voorlooper to look after them, meaning to

inspan again about six o'clock, and trek with the moon till ten. Then I got into the waggon and had a good sleep till half-past two or so in the afternoon, when I got up and cooked some meat, and had my dinner, washing it down with a pannikin of black coffee; for it was difficult to get preserved milk in those days. Just as I had finished, and the driver, a man called Tom, was washing up the things, in comes the young scoundrel of a voorlooper, driving one ox before him.

"'Where are the other oxen?' I asked.

"'Koos!' he said, 'koos! [chief] the other oxen have gone away. I turned my back for a minute, and when I looked round again they were all gone except Kaptein, here, who was rubbing his back against a tree.'

"'You mean that you have been asleep, and let them stray, you villain. I will rub your back against a stick,' I answered, feeling very angry, for it was not a pleasant prospect to be stuck up in that fever-trap for a week or so while we were hunting for the oxen. 'Off you go, and you too, Tom, and mind you don't come back till you have found them. They have trekked back along the Middelburg road, and are a dozen miles off by now, I'll be bound. Now, no words; go, both of you.'

"Tom, the driver, swore and caught the lad a hearty kick, which he richly deserved, and then, having tied old Kaptein up to the dissel-boom with a riem, they got their assegais and sticks, and started. I would have gone too, only I knew that somebody must look after the waggon, and I did not like to leave either of the boys with it at night. I was in a very bad temper, indeed, although I was pretty well used to these sort of occurrences, and soothed myself by taking a rifle and going to kill something. For a couple of hours I poked about without seeing anything that I could get a shot at, but at last, just as I was again within seventy yards of the waggon, I put up an old Impala ram from behind a mimosa-thorn. He ran straight for the waggon, and it was not till he was passing within a few feet of it that I could get a decent shot at him. Then I pulled, and caught him half-way down the spine; over he went, dead as a door-nail, and a pretty shot it was, though I ought not to say it. This little incident put me into rather a better temper, especially as the buck had rolled over right against the after part of the waggon, so I had only to gut him, fix a riem round his legs, and haul him up. By the time I had done this

the sun was down, and the full moon was up, and a beautiful moon it was. And then there came down that wonderful hush that sometimes falls over the African bush in the early hours of the night. No beast was moving, and no bird called. Not a breath of air stirred the quiet trees, and the shadows did not even quiver; they only grew. It was very oppressive and very lonely, for there was not a sign of the cattle or the boys. I was quite thankful for the society of old Kaptein, who was lying down contentedly against the disselboom, chewing the cud with a good conscience.

"Presently, however, Kaptein began to get restless. First he snorted, then he got up and snorted again. I could not make it out, so, like a fool, I got down off the waggon-box to have a look round, thinking it might be the lost oxen coming.

"Next instant I regretted it, for all of a sudden I heard an awful roar and saw something yellow flash past me and light on poor Kaptein. Then came a bellow of agony from the ox, and a crunch as the lion put his teeth through the poor brute's neck, and I began to realise what had happened. My rifle was in the waggon, and my first thought was to get hold of it, and I turned and made a bolt for it. I got my foot on the wheel and flung my body forward on to the waggon, and there I stopped as if I were frozen, and no wonder, for as I was about to spring up I heard the lion behind me, and next second I felt the brute, ay, as plainly as I can feel this table. I felt him, I say, sniffing at my left leg that was hanging down.

"My word! I did feel queer; I don't think that I ever felt so queer before. I dared not move for the life of me, and the odd thing was that I seemed to lose power over my leg, which had an insane sort of inclination to kick out of its own mere motion—just as hysterical people want to laugh when they ought to be particularly solemn. Well, the lion sniffed and sniffed, beginning at my ankle and slowly nosing away up to my thigh. I thought that he was going to get hold then, but he did not. He only growled softly, and went back to the ox. Shifting my head a little I got a full view of him. He was the biggest lion I ever saw,—and I have seen a great many,—and he had a most tremendous black mane. What his teeth were like you can see—look there, pretty big ones, ain't they? Altogether he was a magnificent animal, and, as I lay there sprawling on the fore tongue of the waggon, it occurred to me that he would look uncommonly well in a cage. He

stood there by the carcass of poor Kaptein, and deliberately disembowelled him as neatly as a butcher could have done. All this while I dared not move, for he kept lifting his head and keeping an eye on me as he licked his bloody chops. When he had cleaned Kaptein out, he opened his mouth and roared, and I am not exaggerating when I say that the sound shook the waggon. Instantly there came back an answering roar.

"'Heavens!' I thought, 'there is his mate.'

"Hardly was the thought out of my head when I caught sight in the moonlight of the lioness bounding along through the long grass, and after her a couple of cubs about the size of mastiffs. She stopped within a few feet of my head, and stood, and waved her tail, and fixed me with her glowing yellow eyes; but just as I thought that it was all over she turned, and began to feed on Kaptein, and so did the cubs. There were the four of them within eight feet of me, growling and quarrelling, rending and tearing and crunching poor Kaptein's bones; and there I lay shaking with terror, and the cold perspiration pouring out of me, feeling like another Daniel come to judgment in a new sense of the phrase. Presently the cubs had eaten their fill, and began to get restless. One went round to the back of the waggon and pulled at the Impala buck that hung there, and the other came round my way and began the sniffing game at my leg. Indeed, he did more than that, for, my trouser being hitched up a little, he began to lick the bare skin with his rough tongue. The more he licked the more he liked it, to judge from his increased vigour and the loud purring noise he made. Then I knew that the end had come, for in another second his file-like tongue would have rasped through the skin of my leg—which was luckily pretty tough—and have got to the blood, and then there would be no chance for me. So I just lay there and thought of my sins, and prayed to the Almighty, and thought that, after all, life was a very enjoyable thing.

"And then all of a sudden I heard a crashing of bushes and the shouting and whistling of men, and there were the two boys coming back with the cattle, which they had found trekking along all together. The lions lifted their heads and listened, and then without a sound bounded off—and I fainted.

"The lions came back no more that night, and by the next morning my nerves had got pretty straight again; but I was full of wrath when

I thought of all that I had gone through at the hands, or rather noses, of those four lions, and of the fate of my after-ox Kaptein. He was a splendid ox, and I was very fond of him. So wroth was I that, like a fool, I determined to go for the whole family of them. It was worthy of a greenhorn out on his first hunting-trip; but I did it nevertheless. Accordingly after breakfast, having rubbed some oil upon my leg, which was very sore from the cub's tongue, I took the driver, Tom, who did not half like the job, and having armed myself with an ordinary double No. 12 smooth-bore, the first breech-loader I ever had, I started. I took the smooth-bore because it shot a bullet very well; and my experience has been that a round ball from a smooth-bore is quite as effective against a lion as an express bullet. The lion is soft and not a difficult animal to finish if you hit him anywhere in the body. A buck takes far more killing.

"Well, I started, and the first thing I set to work to do was to try to make out whereabouts the brutes lay up for the day. About three hundred yards from the waggon was the crest of a rise covered with single mimosa-trees, dotted about in a park-like fashion, and beyond this was a stretch of open plain running down to a dry pan, or water-hole, which covered about an acre of ground, and was densely clothed with reeds, now in the sear and yellow leaf. From the farther edge of this pan the ground sloped up again to the great cleft, or nullah, which had been cut out by the action of water, and was pretty thickly sprinkled with bush, among which grew some large trees, I forget of what sort.

"It at once struck me that the dry pan would be a likely place to find my friends in, as there is nothing a lion is fonder of than lying up in reeds, through which he can see things without being seen himself. Accordingly thither I went and prospected. Before I had got half-way round the pan I found the remains of a blue vilder-beeste that had evidently been killed within the last three or four days and partially devoured by lions; and from other indications about I was soon assured that if the family were not in the pan that day, they spent a good deal of their spare time there. But if there, the question was how to get them out; for it was clearly impossible to think of going in after them unless one was quite determined to commit suicide. Now there was a strong wind blowing from the direction of the waggon, across the reedy pan, toward the bush-clad kloof or donga, and this first gave

me the idea of firing the reeds, which, as I think I told you, were pretty dry. Accordingly Tom took some matches and began starting little fires to the left, and I did the same to the right. But the reeds were still green at the bottom, and we should never have got them well alight had it not been for the wind, which got stronger and stronger as the sun got higher, and forced the fire into them. At last, after half an hour's trouble, the flames got a hold, and began to spread out like a fan, whereupon I got round to the farther side of the pan to wait for the lions, standing well out in the open, as we stood at the copse today where you shot the woodcock. It was a rather risky thing to do, but I used to be so sure of my shooting in those days that I did not so much mind the risk. Scarcely had I got round when I heard the reeds parting before the onward rush of some animal. 'Now for it,' said I. On it came. I could see that it was yellow, and prepared for action, when instead of a lion out bounded a beautiful rietbok which had been lying in the shelter of the pan. It must, by the way, have been a rietbok of a peculiarly confiding nature to lay itself down with the lion like the lamb of prophecy, but I suppose that the reeds were thick, and that it kept a long way off.

"Well, I let the rietbok go, and it went like the wind, and kept my eyes fixed upon the reeds. The fire was burning like a furnace now; the flames crackling and roaring as they bit into the reeds, sending spouts of fire twenty feet and more into the air, and making the hot air dance above it in a way that was perfectly dazzling. But the reeds were still half green, and created an enormous quantity of smoke, which came rolling toward me like a curtain, lying very low on account of the wind. Presently, above the crackling of the fire, I heard a startled roar, and then another and another. So the lions were at home.

"I was beginning to get excited now, for, as you fellows know, there is nothing in experience to warm up your nerves like a lion at close quarters, unless it is a wounded buffalo; and I got still more so when I made out through the smoke that the lions were all moving about on the extreme edge of the reeds. Occasionally they would pop their heads out like rabbits from a burrow, and then, catching sight of me standing about fifty yards out, draw them back again. I knew that it must be getting pretty warm behind them, and that they could not keep the game up for long; and I was not mistaken, for suddenly all

four of them broke cover together, the old black-maned lion leading by a few yards. I never saw a more splendid sight in all my hunting experience than those four lions bounding across the veldt, overshadowed by the dense pall of smoke and backed by the fiery furnace of the burning reeds.

"I reckoned that they would pass, on their road to the bushy kloof, within about five and twenty yards of me; so, taking a long breath, I got my gun well on to the lion's shoulder—the black-maned one—so as to allow for an inch or two of motion, and catch him through the heart. I was on, dead on, and my finger was just beginning to tighten on the trigger, when suddenly I went blind—a bit of reed-ash had drifted into my right eye. I danced and rubbed, and got it more or less clear just in time to see the tail of the last lion vanishing round the bushes up the kloof.

"If ever a man was mad I was that man. It was too bad; and such a shot in the open, too! However, I was not going to be beaten, so I just turned and marched for the kloof. Tom, the driver, begged and implored me not to go; but though as a general rule I never pretended to be very brave (which I am not), I was determined that I would either kill those lions or they should kill me. So I told Tom that he need not come unless he liked, but I was going; and being a plucky fellow, a Swazi by birth, he shrugged his shoulders, muttered that I was mad or bewitched, and followed doggedly in my tracks.

"We soon got to the kloof, which was about three hundred yards in length and but sparsely wooded, and then the real fun began. There might be a lion behind every bush—there certainly were four lions somewhere; the delicate question was, where. I peeped and poked and looked in every possible direction, with my heart in my mouth, and was at last rewarded by catching a glimpse of something yellow moving behind a bush. A the same moment, from another bush opposite me out burst one of the cubs and galloped back toward the burned-out pan. I whipped round and let drive a snap-shot that tipped him head over heels, breaking his back within two inches of the root of the tail, and there he lay helpless but glaring. Tom afterward killed him with his assegai. I opened the breech of the gun and hurriedly pulled out the old case, which, to judge from what ensued, must, I suppose, have burst and left a portion of its fabric sticking to the barrel. At any rate, when I tried to get in the new case it would only

enter half-way; and—would you believe it?—this was the moment that the lioness, attracted no doubt by the outcry of her cub, chose to put in an appearance. There she stood, twenty paces or so from me, lashing her tail and looking just as wicked as it is possible to conceive. Slowly I stepped backward, trying to push in the new case, and as I did so she moved on in little runs, dropping down after each run. The danger was imminent, and the case woud not go in. At the moment I oddly enough thought of the cartridge-maker, whose name I will not mention, and earnestly hoped that if the lion got me some condign punishment would overtake him. It would not go in, so I tried to pull it out. It would not come out, either, and my gun was useless if I could not shut it to use the other barrel. I might as well have had no gun. Meanwhile I was walking backward, keeping my eye on the lioness, who was creeping forward on her belly without a sound, but lashing her tail and keeping her eye on me; and in it I saw that she was coming in a few seconds more. I dashed my wrist and the palm of my hand against the brass rim of the cartridge till the blood poured from them—look, there are the scars of it to this day!"

Here Quatermain held up his right hand to the light and showed us seven or eight white cicatrices just where the wrist is set into the hand.

"But it was not of the slightest use," he went on; "the cartridge would not move. I only hope that no other man will ever be put in such an awful position. The lioness gathered herself together, and I gave myself up for lost, when suddenly Tom shouted out from somewhere in my rear:

" 'You are walking on to the wounded cub; turn to the right.'

"I had the sense, dazed as I was, to take the hint, and slewing round at right angles, but still keeping my eyes on the lioness, I continued my backward walk.

"To my intense relief, with a low growl she straightened herself, turned, and bounded off farther up the kloof.

" 'Come on, inkoos,' said Tom; 'let's get back to the waggon.'

" 'All right, Tom,' I answered. 'I will when I have killed those three other lions,' for by this time I was bent on shooting them as I never remember being bent on anything before or since. 'You can go if you like, or you can get up a tree.'

"He considered the position a little, and then he very wisely got up a tree. I wish that I had done the same.

"Meanwhile I had got out my knife, which had an extractor in it, and succeeded after some difficulty in hauling out the case which had so nearly been the cause of my death, and removing the obstruction in the barrel. It was very little thicker than a postage-stamp; certainly not thicker than a piece of writing-paper. This done I loaded the gun, bound my handkerchief round my wrist and hand to stanch the flowing of the blood, and started on again.

"I had noticed that the lioness went into a thick green bush, or rather cluster of bushes, growing near the water; for there was a little stream running down the kloof, about fifty yards higher up, and for this I made. When I got there, however, I could see nothing, so I took up a big stone and threw it into the bushes. I believe that it hit the other cub, for out it came with a rush, giving me a broadside shot of which I promptly availed myself, knocking it over dead. Out, too, came the lioness like a flash of light, but quick as she went I managed to put the other bullet into her ribs, so that she rolled right over three times like a shot rabbit. I instantly got two more cartridges into the gun, and as I did so the lioness got up again and came crawling toward me on her fore paws, roaring and groaning, and with such an expression of diabolical fury on her countenance as I have not often seen. I shot her again through the chest, and she fell over on her side quite dead.

"That was the first and last time that I ever killed a brace of lions right and left, and, what is more, I never heard of anybody else doing it. Naturally I was considerably pleased with myself, and, having again loaded up, went on to look for the black-maned beauty who had killed Kaptein. Slowly and with the greatest care I proceeded up the kloof, searching every bush and tuft of grass as I went. It was wonderfully exciting work, for I never was sure from one moment to another but that he would be on me. I took comfort, however, from the reflection that a lion rarely attacks a man,—rarely, I say; sometimes he does, as you will see,—unless he is cornered or wounded. I must have been nearly an hour hunting after the lion. Once I thought I saw something move in a clump of tambouki grass, but I could not be sure, and when I trod out the grass I could not find him.

"At last I got up to the head of the kloof, which made a cul-de-sac. It was formed of a wall of rock about fifty feet high. Down this rock

trickled a little waterfall, and in front of it, some seventy feet from its face, was a great piled-up mass of boulders, in the crevices and on the top of which grew ferns and grass and stunted bushes. This mass was about twenty-five feet high. The sides of the kloof here were also very steep. Well, I got up to the top of the nullah and looked all round. No signs of the lion. Evidently I had either over-looked him farther down, or he had escaped right away. It was very vexatious; but still three lions were not a bad bag for one gun before dinner, and I was fain to be content. Accordingly I departed back again, making my way round the isolated pillar of boulders, and beginning to feel that I was pretty well done up with excitement and fatigue, and should be more so before I had skinned those three lions. When I had got, as nearly as I could judge, about eighteen yards past the pillar or mass of boulders, I turned to have another look round. I have a pretty sharp eye, but I could see nothing at all.

"Then, on a sudden, I saw something sufficiently alarming. On the top of the mass of boulders, opposite to me, standing out clear against the rock beyond, was the huge black-maned lion. He had been crouching there, and now arose as though by magic. There he stood lashing his tail, just like a statue of the animal on the gateway of Northumberland House that I have seen a picture of. But he did not stand long. Before I could fire—before I could do more than get the gun to my shoulder—he sprang straight up and out from the rock, and, driven by the impetus of that one mighty bound, came hurtling through the air toward me.

"Heavens! how grand he looked, and how awful! High into the air he flew, describing a great arch. Just as he touched the highest point of his spring I fired. I did not dare to wait, for I saw that he would clear the whole space and land right upon me. Without a sight, almost without aim, I fired, as one would fire a snap-shot at a snipe. The bullet told, for I distinctly heard its thud above the rushing sound caused by the passage of the lion through the air. Next second I was swept to the ground (luckily I fell into a low, creeper-clad bush, which broke the shock), and the lion was on the top of me, and the next those great white teeth of his had met in my thigh—I heard them grate against the bone. I yelled out in agony, for I did not feel in the least benumbed and happy, like Dr. Livingstone,—whom, by the way, I knew very well,—and gave myself up for dead. But suddenly, as I

did so, the lion's grip on my thigh loosened, and he stood over me, swaying to and fro, his huge mouth, from which the blood was gushing, wide opened. Then he roared, and the sound shook the rocks.

"To and fro he swung, and suddenly the great head dropped on me, knocking all the breath from my body, and he was dead. My bullet had entered in the centre of his chest and passed out on the right side of the spine about half-way down the back.

"The pain of my wound kept me from fainting, and as soon as I got my breath I managed to drag myself from under him. Thank heavens, his great teeth had not crushed my thigh-bone; but I was losing a great deal of blood, and had it not been for the timely arrival of Tom, with whose aid I got the handkerchief off my wrist and tied it round my leg, twisting it tight with a stick, I think I should have bled to death.

"Well, it was a just reward for my folly in trying to tackle a family of lions single-handed. The odds were too long. I have been lame ever since, and shall be to my dying day; in the month of March the wound always troubles me a great deal, and every three years it breaks out raw. I need scarcely add that I never traded the lot of ivory at Sikukuni's. Another man got it—a German—and made five hundred pounds out of it after paying expenses. I spent the next month on the broad of my back, and was a cripple for six months after that. And now I've told you the yarn, so I will have a drop of hollands and go to bed."

The Man Who Would Be King

Brother to a Prince and Fellow to a Beggar if he be Found Worthy

BY RUDYARD KIPLING

The Law, as quoted, lays down a fair conduct of life, and one not easy to follow. I have been fellow to a beggar again and again under circumstances which prevented either of us finding out whether the other was worthy. I have still to be brother to a Prince, though I once came near to kinship with what might have been a veritable King and was promised the reversion of a Kingdom—army, law-courts, revenue and policy all complete. But, today, I greatly fear that my King is dead, and if I want a crown I must go hunt it for myself.

The beginning of everything was in a railway train upon the road to Mhow from Ajmir. There had been a Deficit in the Budget, which necessitated travelling, not Second-class, which is only half as dear as First-class, but by Intermediate, which is very awful indeed. There are no cushions in the Intermediate class, and the population are either Intermediate, which is Eurasian, or native, which for a long night journey is nasty, or Loafer, which is amusing though intoxicated. Intermediates do not buy from refreshment-rooms. They carry their food in bundles and pots, and buy sweets from the native sweetmeat-sellers, and drink the roadside water. That is why in hot weather Intermediates are taken out of the carriages dead, and in all weathers are most properly looked down upon.

My peculiar Intermediate happened to be empty till I reached Nasirabad, when a big black-browed gentleman in shirt-sleeves entered, and, following the custom of Intermediates, passed the time of day. He was a wanderer and a vagabond like myself, but with an educated taste for whiskey. He told tales of things he had seen and done, of out-of-the-way corners of the Empire into which he had penetrated, and of adventures in which he risked his life for a few days' food.

"If India was filled with men like you and me, not knowing more than the crows where they'd get their next day's rations, it isn't seventy millions of revenue the land would be paying—it's seven hundred millions," said he; and as I looked at his mouth and chin I was disposed to agree with him.

We talked politics—the politics of Loaferdom that sees things from the underside where the lath and plaster is not smoothed off—and we talked postal arrangements because my friend wanted to send a telegram back from the next station to Ajmir, the turning-off place from the Bombay to the Mhow line as you travel westward. My friend had no money beyond eight annas which he wanted for dinner, and I had no money at all, owing to the hitch in the Budget before mentioned. Further, I was going into a wilderness where, though I should resume touch with the Treasury, there were no telegraph offices. I was, therefore, unable to help in any way.

"We might threaten a Station-master, and make him send a wire on tick," said my friend, "but that'd mean enquiries for you and for me, and *I*'ve got my hands full these days. Did you say you were travelling back along this line within any days?"

"Within ten," I said.

"Can't you make it eight?" said he. "Mine is rather urgent business."

"I can send your telegram within ten days if that will serve you," I said.

"I couldn't trust the wire to fetch him now I think of it. It's this way. He leaves Delhi on the 23rd for Bombay. That means he'll be running through Ajmir about the night of the 23rd."

"But I'm going into the Indian Desert," I explained.

"Well *and* good," said he. "You'll be changing at Marwar Junction to get into Jodhpore territory—you must do that—and he'll be coming through Marwar Junction in the early morning of the 24th by the Bombay Mail. Can you be at Marwar Junction on that time? 'Twon't be inconveniencing you because I know that there's precious few pickings to be got out of these Central India States—even though you pretend to be correspondent of the *Backwoodsman.*"

"Have you ever tried that trick?" I asked.

"Again and again, but the Residents find you out, and then you get escorted to the Border before you've time to get your knife into them.

But about my friend here. I *must* give him a word o' mouth to tell him what's come to me or else he won't know where to go. I would take it more than kind of you if you was to come out of Central India in time to catch him at Marwar Junction, and say to him: 'He has gone South for the week.' He'll know what that means. He's a big man with a red beard, and a great swell he is. You'll find him sleeping like a gentleman with all his luggage round him in a Second-class apartment. But don't you be afraid. Slip down the window and say: 'He has gone South for the week,' and he'll tumble. It's only cutting your time of stay in those parts by two days. I ask you as a stranger—going to the West," he said with emphasis.

"Where have *you* come from?" said I.

"From the East," said he, "and I am hoping that you will give him the message on the Square—for the sake of my Mother as well as your own."

Englishmen are not usually softened by appeals to the memory of their mothers; but for certain reasons, which will be fully apparent, I saw fit to agree.

"It's more than a little matter," said he, "and that's why I asked you to do it—and now I know that I can depend on you doing it. A Second-class carriage at Marwar Junction, and a red-haired man asleep in it. You'll be sure to remember. I get out at the next station, and I must hold on there till he comes or sends me what I want."

"I'll give the message if I catch him," I said, "and for the sake of your Mother as well as mine I'll give you a word of advice. Don't try to run the Central India States just now as the correspondent of the *Backwoodsman*. There's a real one knocking about here, and it might lead to trouble."

"Thank you," said he simply, "and when will the swine be gone? I can't starve because he's ruining my work. I wanted to get hold of the Degumber Rajah down here about his father's widow, and give him a jump."

"What did he do to his father's widow, then?"

"Filled her up with red pepper and slippered her to death as she hung from a beam. I found that out myself and I'm the only man that would dare going into the State to get hush-money for it. They'll try to poison me, same as they did in Chortumna when I went on the loot there. But you'll give the man at Marwar Junction my message?"

He got out at a little roadside station, and I reflected. I had heard, more than once, of men personating correspondents of newspapers and bleeding small Native States with threats of exposure, but I had never met any of the caste before. They lead a hard life, and generally die with great suddenness. The Native States have a wholesome horror of English newspapers, which may throw light on their peculiar methods of government, and do their best to choke correspondents with champagne, or drive them out of their mind with four-in-hand barouches. They do not understand that nobody cares a straw for the internal administration of Native States so long as oppression and crime are kept within decent limits, and the ruler is not drugged, drunk, or diseased from one end of the year to the other. They are the dark places of the earth, full of unimaginable cruelty, touching the Railway and the Telegraph on one side, and, on the other, the days of Harun-al-Raschid. When I left the train I did business with divers Kings, and in eight days passed through many changes of life. Sometimes I wore dress-clothes and consorted with Princes and Politicals, drinking from crystal and eating from silver. Sometimes I lay out upon the ground and devoured what I could get, from a plate made of leaves, and drank the running water, and slept under the same rug as my servant. It was all in the day's work.

Then I headed for the Great Indian Desert upon the proper date, as I had promised, and the night Mail set me down at Marwar Junction, where a funny little, happy-go-lucky, native-managed railway runs to Jodhpore. The Bombay Mail from Delhi makes a short halt at Marwar. She arrived as I got in, and I had just time to hurry to her platform and go down the carriages. There was only one Second-class on the train. I slipped the window and looked down upon a flaming red beard, half covered by a railway rug. That was my man, fast asleep, and I dug him gently in the ribs. He woke with a grunt and I saw his face in the light of the lamps. It was a great and shining face.

"Tickets again?" said he.

"No," said I. "I am to tell you that he is gone South for the week. He has gone South for the week!"

The train had begun to move out. The red man rubbed his eyes. "He has gone South for the week," he repeated. "Now that's just like his impidence. Did he say that I was to give you anything? 'Cause I won't."

"He didn't," I said and dropped away, and watched the red lights die out in the dark. It was horribly cold because the wind was blowing off the sands. I climbed into my own train—not an Intermediate carriage this time—and went to sleep.

If the man with the beard had given me a rupee I should have kept it as a memento of a rather curious affair. But the consciousness of having done my duty was my only reward.

Later on I reflected that two gentlemen like my friends could not do any good if they foregathered and personated correspondents of newspapers, and might, if they black-mailed one of the little rat-trap states of Central India or Southern Rajputana, get themselves into serious difficulties. I therefore took some trouble to describe them as accurately as I could remember to people who would be interested in deporting them: and succeeded, so I was later informed, in having them headed back from the Degumber borders.

Then I became respectable, and returned to an Office where there were no Kings and no incidents outside the daily manufacture of a newspaper. A newspaper office seems to attract every conceivable sort of person, to the prejudice of discipline. Zenana-mission ladies arrive, and beg that the Editor will instantly abandon all his duties to describe a Christian prize-giving in a back-slum of a perfectly inaccessible village; Colonels who have been overpassed for command sit down and sketch the outline of a series of ten, twelve, or twenty-four leading articles on Seniority *versus* Selection; missionaries wish to know why they have not been permitted to escape from the regular vehicles of abuse and swear at a brother-missionary under special patronage of the editorial We; stranded theatrical companies troop up to explain that they cannot pay for their advertisements, but on their return from New Zealand or Tahiti will do so with interest; inventors of patent punkah-pulling machines, carriage couplings and unbreakable swords and axle-trees call with specifications in their pockets and hours at their disposal; tea-companies enter and elaborate their prospectuses with the office pens; secretaries of ball-committees clamour to have the glories of their last dance more fully described; strange ladies rustle in and say: "I want a hundred lady's cards printed *at once*, please," which is manifestly part of an Editor's duty; and every dissolute ruffian that ever tramped the Grand Trunk Road makes it his business to ask for employment as a proof-reader. And, all the time, the telephone-bell is

ringing madly, and Kings are being killed on the Continent, and Empires are saying—"You're another," and Mister Gladstone is calling down brimstone upon the British Dominions, and the little black copy-boys are whining, *"kaa-pi chay-ha-yeh"* (copy wanted) like tired bees, and most of the paper is as blank as Modred's shield.

But that is the amusing part of the year. There are six other months when none ever come to call, and the thermometer walks inch by inch up to the top of the glass, and the office is darkened to just above reading-light, and the press-machines are red-hot to touch, and nobody writes anything but accounts of amusements in the Hill-stations or obituary notices. Then the telephone becomes a tinkling terror, because it tells you of the sudden deaths of men and women that you knew intimately, and the prickly heat covers you with a garment, and you sit down and write: "A slight increase of sickness is reported from the Khuda Janta Khan District. The outbreak is purely sporadic in its nature, and, thanks to the energetic efforts of the District authorities, is now almost at an end. It is, however, with deep regret we record the death," etc.

Then the sickness really breaks out, and the less recording and reporting the better for the peace of the subscribers. But the Empires and the Kings continue to divert themselves as selfishly as before, and the Foreman thinks that a daily paper really ought to come out once in twenty-four hours, and all the people at the Hill-stations in the middle of their amusements say: "Good gracious! Why can't the paper be sparkling? I'm sure there's plenty going on up here."

That is the dark half of the moon, and, as the advertisements say, "must be experienced to be appreciated."

It was in that season, and a remarkably evil season, that the paper began running the last issue of the week on Saturday night, which is to say Sunday morning, after the custom of a London paper. This was a great convenience, for immediately after the paper was put to bed, the dawn would lower the thermometer from 96° to almost 84° for half an hour, and in that chill—you have no idea how cold is 84° on the grass until you begin to pray for it—a very tired man could get off to sleep ere the heat roused him.

One Saturday night it was my pleasant duty to put the paper to bed alone. A King or courtier or a courtesan or a Community was going to die or get a new Constitution, or do something that was im-

portant on the other side of the world, and the paper was to be held open till the latest possible minute in order to catch the telegram.

It was a pitchy black night, as stifling as a June night can be, and the *loo,* the red-hot wind from the westward, was booming among the tinder-dry trees and pretending that the rain was on its heels. Now and again a spot of almost boiling water would fall on the dust with the flop of a frog, but all our weary world knew that was only pretence. It was a shade cooler in the press-room than the office, so I sat there, while the type ticked and clicked, and the night-jars hooted at the windows, and the all but naked compositors wiped the sweat from their foreheads, and called for water. The thing that was keeping us back, whatever it was, would not come off, though the *loo* dropped and the last type was set, and the whole round earth stood still in the choking heat, with its finger on its lip, to wait the event. I drowsed, and wondered whether the telegraph was a blessing, and whether this dying man, or struggling people, might be aware of the inconvenience the delay was causing. There was no special reason beyond the heat and worry to make tension, but, as the clock-hands crept up to three o'clock and the machines spun their fly-wheels two and three times to see that all was in order, before I said the word that would set them off, I could have shrieked aloud.

Then the roar and rattle of the wheels shivered the quiet into little bits. I rose to go away, but two men in white clothes stood in front of me. The first one said: "It's him!" The second said: "So it is!" And they both laughed almost as loudly as the machinery roared, and mopped their foreheads. "We seed there was a light burning across the road and we were sleeping in that ditch there for coolness, and I said to my friend here, The office is open. Let's come along and speak to him as turned us back from the Degumber State," said the smaller of the two. He was the man I had met in the Mhow train, and his fellow was the red-bearded man of Marwar Junction. There was no mistaking the eyebrows of the one or the beard of the other.

I was not pleased, because I wished to go to sleep, not to squabble with loafers. "What do you want?" I asked.

"Half an hour's talk with you, cool and comfortable, in the office," said the red-bearded man. "We'd *like* some drink—the Contrack doesn't begin yet, Peachey, so you needn't look—but what we really want is advice. We don't want money. We ask you as a favour, be-

cause we found out you did us a bad turn about Degumber State."

I led from the press-room to the stifling office with the maps on the walls, and the red-haired man rubbed his hands. "That's something like," said he. "This was the proper shop to come to. Now, Sir, let me introduce to you Brother Peachey Carnehan, that's him, and Brother Daniel Dravot, that is *me,* and the less said about our professions the better, for we have been most things in our time. Soldier, sailor, compositor, photographer, proof-reader, street-preacher, and correspondent of the *Backwoodsman* when we thought the paper wanted one. Carnehan is sober, and so am I. Look at us first, and see that's sure. It will save you cutting into my talk. We'll take one of your cigars apiece, and you shall see us light up."

I watched the test. The men were absolutely sober, so I gave them each a tepid whiskey and soda.

"Well *and* good," said Carnehan of the eyebrows, wiping the froth from his moustache. "Let me talk now, Dan. We have been all over India, mostly on foot. We have been boiler-fitters, engine-drivers, petty contractors, and all that, and we have decided that India isn't big enough for such as us."

They certainly were too big for the office. Dravot's beard seemed to fill half the room and Carnehan's shoulders the other half, as they sat on the big table. Carnehan continued: "The country isn't half worked out because they that governs it won't let you touch it. They spend all their blessed time in governing it, and you can't lift a spade, nor chip a rock, nor look for oil, nor anything like that without all the Government saying—'Leave it alone, and let us govern.' Therefore, such *as* it is, we will let it alone, and go away to some other place where a man isn't crowded and can come to his own. We are not little men, and there is nothing that we are afraid of except Drink, and we have signed a Contrack on that. *Therefore,* we are going away to be Kings."

"Kings in our own right," muttered Dravot.

"Yes, of course," I said. "You've been tramping in the sun, and it's a very warm night, and hadn't you better sleep over the notion? Come tomorrow."

"Neither drunk nor sunstruck," said Dravot. "We have slept over the notion half a year, and require to see Books and Atlases, and we have decided that there is only one place now in the world that two strong men can Sar-a-*whack.* They call it Kafiristan. By my reckon-

ing it's the top right-hand corner of Afghanistan, not more than three hundred miles from Peshawar. They have two-and-thirty heathen idols there, and we'll be the thirty-third and fourth. It's a mountainous country, and the women of those parts are very beautiful."

"But that is provided against in the Contrack," said Carnehan. "Neither Woman nor Liqu-or, Daniel."

"And that's all we know, except that no one has gone there, and they fight, and in any place where they fight a man who knows how to drill men can always be a King. We shall go to those parts and say to any King we find—'D'you want to vanquish your foes?' and we will show him how to drill men; for that we know better than anything else. Then we will subvert that King and seize his Throne and establish a Dy-nasty."

"You'll be cut to pieces before you're fifty miles across the Border," I said. "You have to travel through Afghanistan to get to that country. It's one mass of mountains and peaks and glaciers, and no Englishman has been through it. The people are utter brutes, and even if you reached them you couldn't do anything."

"That's more like," said Carnehan. "If you could think us a little more mad we would be more pleased. We have come to you to know about this country, to read a book about it, and to be shown maps. We want you to tell us that we are fools and to show us your books." He turned to the book-cases.

"Are you at all in earnest?" I said.

"A little," said Dravot sweetly. "As big a map as you have got, even if it's all blank where Kafiristan is, and any books you've got. We can read, though we aren't very educated."

I uncased the big thirty-two-miles-to-the-inch map of India, and two smaller Frontier maps, hauled down volume INF-KAN of the *Encyclopædia Britannica,* and the men consulted them.

"See here!" said Dravot, his thumb on the map. "Up to Jagdallak, Peachey and me know the road. We was there with Robert's Army. We'll have to turn off to the right at Jagdallak through Laghmann territory. Then we get among the hills—fourteen thousand feet—fifteen thousand—it will be cold work there, but it don't look very far on the map."

I handed him Wood on the *Sources of the Oxus.* Carnehan was deep in the *Encyclopædia.*

"They're a mixed lot," said Dravot reflectively; "and it won't help us to know the names of their tribes. The more tribes the more they'll fight, and the better for us. From Jagdallak to Ashang. H'mm!"

"But all the information about the country is as sketchy and inaccurate as can be," I protested. "No one knows anything about it really. Here's the file of the *United Services' Institute.* Read what Bellew says."

"Blow Bellew!" said Carnehan. "Dan, they're a stinkin' lot of heathens, but this book here says they think they're related to us English."

I smoked while the men pored over *Raverty, Wood,* the maps, and the *Encyclopædia.*

"There is no use your waiting," said Dravot politely. "It's about four o'clock now. We'll go before six o'clock if you want to sleep, and we won't steal any of the papers. Don't you sit up. We're two harmless lunatics, and if you come tomorrow evening down to the Serai we'll say good-bye to you."

"You *are* two fools," I answered. "You'll be turned back at the frontier or cut up the minute you set foot in Afghanistan. Do you want any money or a recommendation down-country? I can help you to the chance of work next week."

"Next week we shall be hard at work ourselves, thank you," said Dravot. "It isn't so easy being a King as it looks. When we've got our Kingdom in going order we'll let you know, and you can come up and help us to govern it."

"Would two lunatics make a Contrack like that?" said Carnehan, with subdued pride, showing me a greasy half-sheet of notepaper on which was written the following. I copied it, then and there, as a curiosity—

This Contract between me and you persuing witnesseth in the name of God—Amen and so forth.

(*One*) *That me and you will settle this matter together;* i.e., *to be Kings of Kafiristan.*

(*Two*) *That you and me will not, while this matter is being settled, look at any Liquor, nor any Woman black, white, or brown, so as to get mixed up with one or the other harmful.*

(*Three*) *That we conduct ourselves with Dignity and Discretion, and if one of us gets into trouble the other will stay by him.*

Signed by you and me this day.
Peachey Taliaferro Carnehan.
Daniel Dravot.
Both Gentlemen at Large.

"There was no need for the last article," said Carnehan, blushing modestly; "but it looks regular. Now you know the sort of men that loafers are—we *are* loafers, Dan, until we get out of India—and *do* you think that we would sign a Contrack like that unless we was in earnest? We have kept away from the two things that make life worth having."

"You won't enjoy your lives much longer if you are going to try this idiotic adventure. Don't set the office on fire," I said, "and go away before nine o'clock."

I left them still poring over the maps and making notes on the back of the "Contrack." "Be sure to come down to the Serai tomorrow," were their parting words.

The Kumharsen Serai is the great four-square sink of humanity where the strings of camels and horses from the North load and unload. All the nationalities of Central Asia may be found there, and most of the folk of India proper. Balkh and Bokhara there meet Bengal and Bombay, and try to draw eye-teeth. You can buy ponies, turquoises, Persian pussy-cats, saddle-bags, fat-tailed sheep and musk in the Kumharsen Serai, and get many strange things for nothing. In the afternoon I went down to see whether my friends intended to keep their word or were lying there drunk.

A priest attired in fragments of ribbons and rags stalked up to me, gravely twisting a child's paper whirligig. Behind him was his servant bending under the load of a crate of mud toys. The two were loading up two camels, and the inhabitants of the Serai watched them with shrieks of laughter.

"The priest is mad," said a horse-dealer to me. "He is going up to Kabul to sell toys to the Amir. He will either be raised to honour or have his head cut off. He came in here this morning and has been behaving madly ever since."

"The witless are under the protection of God," stammered a flat-

cheeked Usbeg in broken Hindi. "They foretell future events."

"Would they could have foretold that my caravan would have been cut up by the Shinwaris almost within shadow of the Pass!" grunted the Eusufzai agent of a Rajputana trading-house whose goods had been diverted into the hands of other robbers just across the Border, and whose misfortunes were the laughing-stock of the bazar. "Ohé, priest, whence come you and whither do you go?"

"From Roum have I come," shouted the priest, waving his whirligig; "from Roum, blown by the breath of a hundred devils across the sea! O thieves, robbers, liars, the blessing of Pir Khan on pigs, dogs, and perjurers! Who will take the Protected of God to the North to sell charms that are never still to the Amir? The camels shall not gall, the sons shall not fall sick, and the wives shall remain faithful while they are away, of the men who give me place in their caravan. Who will assist me to slipper the King of the Roos with a golden slipper with a silver heel? The protection of Pir Khan be upon his labours!" He spread out the skirts of his gaberdine and pirouetted between the lines of tethered horses.

"There starts a caravan from Peshawar to Kabul in twenty days, *Huzrut*," said the Eusufzai trader. "My camels go therewith. Do thou also go and bring us good-luck."

"I will go even now!" shouted the priest. "I will depart upon my winged camels, and be at Peshawar in a day! Ho! Hazar Mir Khan," he yelled to his servant, "drive out the camels, but let me first mount my own."

He leaped on the back of his beast as it knelt, and, turning round to me, cried: "Come thou also, Sahib, a little along the road, and I will sell thee a charm—an amulet that shall make thee King of Kafiristan."

Then the light broke upon me, and I followed the two camels out of the Serai till we reached open road and the priest halted.

"What d'you think o' that?" said he in English. "Carnehan can't talk their patter, so I've made him my servant. He makes a handsome servant. 'Tisn't for nothing that I've been knocking about the country for fourteen years. Didn't I do that talk neat? We'll hitch on to a caravan at Peshawar till we get to Jagdallak, and then we'll see if we can get donkeys for our camels, and strike into Kafiristan. Whirligigs for the Amir, O Lor! Put your hand under the camel-bags and tell me what you feel."

I felt the butt of a Martini, and another and another.

"Twenty of 'em," said Dravot placidly. "Twenty of 'em and ammunition to correspond, under the whirligigs and the mud dolls."

"Heaven help you if you are caught with those things!" I said. "A Martini is worth her weight in silver among the Pathans."

"Fifteen hundred rupees of capital—every rupee we could beg, borrow, or steal—are invested on these two camels," said Dravot. "We won't get caught. We're going through the Khaiber with a regular caravan. Who'd touch a poor mad priest?"

"Have you got everything you want?" I asked, overcome with astonishment.

"Not yet, but we shall soon. Give us a memento of your kindness, *Brother*. You did me a service, yesterday, and that time in Marwar. Half my Kingdom shall you have, as the saying is." I slipped a small charm compass from my watch chain and handed it up to the priest.

"Good-bye," said Dravot, giving me hand cautiously. "It's the last time we'll shake hands with an Englishman these many days. Shake hands with him, Carnehan," he cried, as the second camel passed me.

Carnehan leaned down and shook hands. Then the camels passed away along the dusty road, and I was left alone to wonder. My eye could detect no failure in the disguises. The scene in the Serai proved that they were complete to the native mind. There was just the chance, therefore, that Carnehan and Dravot would be able to wander through Afghanistan without detection. But, beyond, they would find death—certain and awful death.

Ten days later a native correspondent giving me the news of the day from Peshawar, wound up his letter with: "There has been much laughter here on account of a certain mad priest who is going in his estimation to sell petty gauds and insignificant trinkets which he ascribes as great charms to H. H. the Amir of Bokhara. He passed through Peshawar and attached himself to the Second Summer caravan that goes to Kabul. The merchants are pleased because through superstition they imagine that such mad fellows bring good-fortune."

The two, then, were beyond the Border. I would have prayed for them, but, that night, a real King died in Europe, and demanded an obituary notice.

. . . . . .

The wheel of the world swings through the same phases again and again. Summer passed and winter thereafter, and came and passed again. The daily paper continued and I with it, and upon the third summer there fell a hot night, a night-issue, and a strained waiting for something to be telegraphed from the other side of the world, exactly as had happened before. A few great men had died in the past two years, the machines worked with more clatter, and some of the trees in the Office garden were a few feet taller. But that was all the difference.

I passed over to the press-room, and went through just such a scene as I have already described. The nervous tension was stronger than it had been two years before, and I felt the heat more acutely. At three o'clock I cried, "Print off," and turned to go, when there crept to my chair what was left of a man. He was bent into a circle, his head was sunk between his shoulders, and he moved his feet one over the other like a bear. I could hardly see whether he walked or crawled —this rag-wrapped, whining cripple who addressed me by name, crying that he was come back. "Can you give me a drink?" he whimpered. "For the Lord's sake, give me a drink!"

I went back to the office, the man following with groans of pain, and I turned up the lamp.

"Don't you know me?" he gasped, dropping into a chair, and he turned his drawn face, surmounted by a shock of gray hair, to the light.

I looked at him intently. Once before had I seen eyebrows that met over the nose in an inch-broad black band, but for the life of me I could not tell where.

"I don't know you," I said, handing him the whiskey. "What can I do for you?"

He took a gulp of the spirit raw, and shivered in spite of the suffocating heat.

"I've come back," he repeated; "and I was the King of Kafiristan—me and Dravot—crowned Kings we was! In this office we settled it —you setting there and giving us the books. I am Peachey Taliaferro Carnehan, and you've been setting here ever since—O Lord!"

I was more than a little astonished, and expressed my feelings accordingly.

"It's true," said Carnehan, with a dry cackle, nursing his feet, which

were wrapped in rags. "True as gospel. Kings we were, with crowns upon our heads—me and Dravot—poor Dan—oh, poor, poor Dan, that would never take advice, not though I begged of him!"

"Take the whiskey," I said, "and take your own time. Tell me all you can recollect of everything from beginning to end. You got across the border on your camels, Dravot dressed as a mad priest and you his servant. Do you remember that?"

"I ain't mad—yet, but I shall be that way soon. Of course I remember. Keep looking at me, or maybe my words will go all to pieces. Keep looking at me in my eyes and don't say anything."

I leaned forward and looked into his face as steadily as I could. He dropped one hand upon the table and I grasped it by the wrist. It was twisted like a bird's claw, and upon the back was a ragged, red, diamond-shaped scar.

"No, don't look there. Look at *me*," said Carnehan. "That comes afterwards, but for the Lord's sake don't distrack me. We left with that caravan, me and Dravot playing all sorts of antics to amuse the people we were with. Dravot used to make us laugh in the evenings when all the people was cooking their dinners—cooking their dinners, and . . . what did they do then? They lit little fires with sparks that went into Dravot's beard, and we all laughed—fit to die. Little red fires they was, going into Dravot's big red beard—so funny." His eyes left mine and he smiled foolishly.

"You went as far as Jagdallak with that caravan," I said at a venture, "after you had lit those fires. To Jagdallak, where you turned off to try to get into Kafiristan."

"No, we didn't neither. What are you talking about? We turned off before Jagdallak, because we heard the roads was good. But they wasn't good enough for our two camels—mine and Dravot's. When we left the caravan, Dravot took off all his clothes and mine too, and said we would be heathen, because the Kafirs didn't allow Mohammedans to talk to them. So we dressed betwixt and between, and such a sight as Daniel Dravot I never saw yet nor expect to see again. He burned half his beard, and slung a sheep-skin over his shoulder, and shaved his head into patterns. He shaved mine, too, and made me wear outrageous things to look like a heathen. That was in a most mountainous country, and our camels couldn't go along any more because of the mountains. They were tall and black, and coming home

I saw them fight like wild goats—there are lots of goats in Kafiristan. And these mountains, they never keep still, no more than the goats. Always fighting they are, and don't let you sleep at night."

"Take some more whiskey," I said very slowly. "What did you and Daniel Dravot do when the camels could go no further because of the rough roads that led into Kafiristan?"

"What did which do? There was a party called Peachey Taliaferro Carnehan that was with Dravot. Shall I tell you about him? He died out there in the cold. Slap from the bridge fell old Peachey, turning and twisting in the air like a penny whirligig that you can sell to the Amir.—No; they was two for three ha'pence, those whirligigs, or I am much mistaken and woeful sore. . . . And then these camels were no use, and Peachey said to Dravot—'For the Lord's sake let's get out of this before our heads are chopped off,' and with that they killed the camels all among the mountains, not having anything in particular to eat, but first they took off the boxes with the guns and the ammunition, till two men came along driving four mules. Dravot up and dances in front of them, singing—'Sell me four mules.' Says the first man—'If you are rich enough to buy, you are rich enough to rob'; but before ever he could put his hand to his knife, Dravot breaks his neck over his knee, and the other party runs away. So Carnehan loaded the mules with the rifles that was taken off the camels, and together we starts forward into those bitter cold mountaineous parts, and never a road broader than the back of your hand."

He paused for a moment, while I asked him if he could remember the nature of the country through which he had journeyed.

"I am telling you as straight as I can, but my head isn't as good as it might be. They drove nails through it to make me hear better how Dravot died. The country was mountaineous and the mules were most contrary, and the inhabitants was dispersed and solitary. They went up and up, and down and down, and that other party, Carnehan, was imploring of Dravot not to sing and whistle so loud, for fear of bringing down the tremenjus avalanches. But Dravot says that if a King couldn't sing it wasn't worth being King, and whacked the mules over the rump, and never took no heed for ten cold days. We came to a big level valley all among the mountains, and the mules were near dead, so we killed them, not having anything in special for them

or us to eat. We sat upon the boxes, and played odd and even with the cartridges that was jolted out.

"Then ten men with bows and arrows ran down that valley, chasing twenty men with bows and arrows, and the row was tremenjus. They was fair men—fairer than you or me—with yellow hair and remarkable well built. Says Dravot, unpacking the guns—'This is the beginning of the business. We'll fight for the ten men,' and with that he fires two rifles at the twenty men, and drops one of them at two hundred yards from the rock where he was sitting. The other men began to run, but Carnehan and Dravot sits on the boxes picking them off at all ranges, up and down the valley. Then we goes up to the ten men that had run across the snow too, and they fires a footy little arrow at us. Dravot he shoots above their heads and they all falls down flat. Then he walks over them and kicks them, and then he lifts them up and shakes hands all round to make them friendly like. He calls them and gives them the boxes to carry, and waves his hand for all the world as though he was King already. They takes the boxes and him across the valley and up the hill into a pine wood on the top, where they was half a dozen big stone idols. Dravot he goes to the biggest—a fellow they call Imbra—and lays a rifle and a cartridge at his feet, rubbing his nose respectful with his own nose, patting him on the head, and saluting in front of it. He turns round to the men and nods his head, and says—'That's all right. I'm in the know too, and all these old jim-jams are my friends.' Then he opens his mouth and points down it, and when the first man brings him food, he says—'No'; and when the second man brings him food he says—'No'; but when one of the old priests and the boss of the village brings him food, he says—'Yes'; very haughty, and eats it slow. That was how we came to our first village, without any trouble, just as though we had tumbled from the skies. But we tumbled from one of those damned rope-bridges, you see and—you couldn't expect a man to laugh much after that?"

"Take some more whiskey and go on," I said. "That was the first village you came into. How did you get to be King?"

"I wasn't King," said Carnehan. "Dravot he was the King, and a handsome man he looked with the gold crown on his head and all. Him and the other party stayed in that village, and every morning Dravot sat by the side of old Imbra, and the people came and wor-

shipped. That was Dravot's order. Then a lot of men came into the valley, and Carnehan Dravot picks them off with the rifles before they knew where they was, and runs down into the valley and up again the other side and finds another village, same as the first one, and the people all falls down flat on their faces, and Dravot says—'Now what is the trouble between you two villages?' and the people points to a woman, as fair as you or me, that was carried off, and Dravot takes her back to the first village and counts up the dead—eight there was. For each dead man Dravot pours a little milk on the ground and waves his arms like a whirligig and 'That's all right,' says he. Then he and Carnehan takes the big boss of each village by the arm and walks them down into the valley, and shows them how to scratch a line with a spear right down the valley, and gives each a sod of turf from both sides of the line. Then all the people comes down and shouts like the devil and all, and Dravot says—'Go and dig the land, and be fruitful and multiply,' which they did, though they didn't understand. Then we asks the names of things in their lingo—bread and water and fire and idols and such, and Dravot leads the priest of each village up to the idol, and says he must sit there and judge the people, and if anything goes wrong he is to be shot.

"Next week they was all turning up the land in the valley as quiet as bees and much prettier, and the priests heard all the complaints and told Dravot in dumb show what it was about. 'That's just the beginning,' says Dravot. 'They think we're Gods.' He and Carnehan picks out twenty good men and shows them how to click off a rifle, and form fours, and advance in line, and they was very pleased to do so, and clever to see the hang of it. Then he takes out his pipe and his baccy-pouch and leaves one at one village, and one at the other, and off we two goes to see what was to be done in the next valley. That was all rock, and there was a little village there, and Carnehan says—'Send 'em to the old valley to plant,' and takes 'em there and gives 'em some land that wasn't took before. They were a poor lot, and we blooded 'em with a kid before letting 'em into the new Kingdom. That was to impress the people, and then they settled down quiet, and Carnehan went back to Dravot who had got into another valley, all snow and ice and most mountaineous. There was no people there and the Army got afraid, so Dravot shoots one of them, and goes on till he finds some people in a village, and the Army explains

that unless the people wants to be killed they had better not shoot their little matchlocks; for they had matchlocks. We makes friends with the priest and I stays there alone with two of the Army, teaching the men how to drill, and a thundering big Chief comes across the snow with kettle-drums and horns twanging, because he heard there was a new God kicking about. Carnehan sights for the brown of the men half a mile across the snow and wings one of them. Then he sends a message to the Chief that, unless he wished to be killed, he must come and shake hands with me and leave his arms behind. The Chief comes alone first, and Carnehan shakes hands with him and whirls his arms about, same as Dravot used, and very much surprised that Chief was, and strokes my eyebrows. Then Carnehan goes alone to the Chief, and asks him in dumb show if he had an enemy he hated. 'I have,' says the Chief. So Carnehan weeds out the pick of his men, and sets the two of the Army to show them drill and at the end of two weeks the men can manœuvre about as well as Volunteers. So he marches with the Chief to a great big plain on the top of a mountain, and the Chief's men rushes into a village and takes it; we three Martinis firing into the brown of the enemy. So we took that village too, and I gives the Chief a rag from my coat and says, 'Occupy till I come'; which was scriptural. By way of a reminder, when me and the Army was eighteen hundred yards away, I drops a bullet near him standing on the snow, and all the people falls flat on their faces. Then I sends a letter to Dravot wherever he be by land or by sea."

At the risk of throwing the creature out of train I interrupted—"How could you write a letter up yonder?"

"The letter?—Oh!—The letter! Keep looking at me between the eyes, please. It was a string-talk letter, that we'd learned the way of it from a blind beggar in the Punjab."

I remember that there had once come to the office a blind man with a knotted twig and a piece of string which he wound round the twig according to some cipher of his own. He could, after the lapse of days or hours, repeat the sentence which he had reeled up. He had reduced the alphabet to eleven primitive sounds; and tried to teach me his method, but I could not understand.

"I sent that letter to Dravot," said Carnehan; "and told him to come back because this Kingdom was growing too big for me to handle, and then I struck for the first valley, to see how the priests were working.

They called the village we took along with the Chief, Bashkai, and the first village we took, Er-Heb. The priests at Er-Heb was doing all right, but they had a lot of pending cases about land to show me, and some men from another village had been firing arrows at night. I went out and looked for that village, and fired four rounds at it from a thousand yards. That used all the cartridges I cared to spend, and I waited for Dravot, who had been away two or three months, and I kept my people quiet.

"One morning I heard the devil's own noise of drums and horns, and Dan Dravot marches down the hill with his Army and a tail of hundreds of men, and, which was the most amazing, a great gold crown on his head. 'My Gord, Carnehan,' says Daniel, 'this is a tremenjus business, and we've got the whole country as far as it's worth having. I am the son of Alexander by Queen Semiramis, and you're my younger brother and a God too! It's the biggest thing we've ever seen. I've been marching and fighting for six weeks with the Army, and every footy little village for fifty miles has come in rejoiceful; and more than that, I've got the key of the whole show, as you'll see, and I've got a crown for you! I told 'em to make two of 'em at a place called Shu, where the gold lies in the rock like suet in mutton. Gold I've seen, and turquoise I've kicked out of the cliffs, and there's garnets in the sands of the river, and here's a chunk of amber that a man brought me. Call up all the priests and, here, take your crown."

"One of the men opens a black hair bag, and I slips the crown on. It was too small and too heavy, but I wore it for the glory. Hammered gold it was—five pound weight, like a hoop of a barrel.

" 'Peachey,' says Dravot, 'we don't want to fight no more. The Craft's the trick so help me!' and he brings forward that same Chief that I left at Bashkai—Billy Fish we called him afterwards, because he was so like Billy Fish that drove the big tank-engine at Mach on the Bolan in the old days. 'Shake hands with him,' says Dravot, and I shook hands and nearly dropped, for Billy Fish gave me the Grip. I said nothing, but tried him with the Fellow Craft Grip. He answers, all right, and I tried the Master's Grip, but that was a slip. 'A Fellow Craft he is!' I says to Dan. 'Does he know the word?'—'He does,' says Dan, 'and all the priests know. It's a miracle. The Chiefs and the priests can work a Fellow Craft Lodge in a way that's very like ours, and they've cut the marks on the rocks, but they don't

know the Third Degree, and they've come to find out. It's Gord's Truth. I've known these long years that the Afghans knew up to the Fellow Craft Degree, but this is a miracle. A God and a Grand-Master of the Craft am I, and a Lodge in the Third Degree I will open, and we'll raise the head priests and the Chiefs of the villages.'

"'It's against all the law,' I says, 'holding a Lodge without warrant from anyone; and you know we never held office in any Lodge.'

"'It's a master-stroke o' policy,' says Dravot. 'It means running the country as easy as a four-wheeled bogie on a down grade. We can't stop to enquire now, or they'll turn against us. I've forty Chiefs at my heel, and passed and raised according to their merit they shall be. Billet these men on the villages, and see that we run up a Lodge of some kind. The temple of Imbra will do for the Lodge-room. The women must make aprons as you show them. I'll hold a levee of Chiefs tonight and Lodge tomorrow.'

"I was fair run off my legs, but I wasn't such a fool as not to see what a pull this Craft business gave us. I showed the priests' families how to make aprons of the degrees, but for Dravot's apron the blue border and marks was made of turquoise lumps on white hide, not cloth. We took a great square stone in the temple for the Master's chair, and little stones for the officers' chairs, and painted the black pavement with white squares, and did what we could to make things regular.

"At the levee which was held that night on the hillside with big bonfires, Dravot gives out that him and me were Gods and sons of Alexander, and Past Grand-Masters in the Craft, and was come to make Kafiristan a country where every man should eat in peace and drink in quiet, and specially obey us. Then the Chiefs come round to shake hands, and they were so hairy and white and fair it was just shaking hands with old friends. We gave them names according as they was like men we had known in India—Billy Fish, Holly Dilworth, Pikky Kergan, that was Bazar-master when I was at Mhow, and so on, and so on.

"*The* most amazing miracles was at Lodge next night. One of the old priests was watching us continuous, and I felt uneasy, for I knew we'd have to fudge the Ritual, and I didn't know what the men knew. The old priest was a stranger come in from beyond the village of Bashkai. The minute Dravot puts on the Master's apron that the

girls had made for him, the priest fetches a whoop and a howl, and tries to overturn the stone that Dravot was sitting on. 'It's all up now,' I says. 'That comes of meddling with the Craft without warrant!' Dravot never winked an eye, not when ten priests took and tilted over the Grand-Master's chair—which was to say the stone of Imbra. The priest begins rubbing the bottom end of it to clear away the black dirt, and presently he shows all the other priests the Master's Mark, same as was on Dravot's apron, cut into the stone. Not even the priests of the temple of Imbra knew it was there. The old chap falls flat on his face at Dravot's feet and kisses 'em. 'Luck again,' says Dravot, across the Lodge to me, 'they say it's the missing Mark that no one could understand the why of. We're more than safe now.' Then he bangs the butt of his gun for a gavel and says: 'By virtue of the authority vested in me by my own right hand and the help of Peachey, I declare myself Grand-Master of all Freemasonry in Kafiristan in this the Mother Lodge o' the country, and King of Kafiristan equally with Peachey!' At that he puts on his crown and I puts on mine—I was doing Senior Warden—and we opens the Lodge in most ample form. It was a amazing miracle! The priests moved in Lodge through the first two degrees almost without telling, as if the memory was coming back to them. After that, Peachey and Dravot raised such as was worthy—high priests and Chiefs of far-off villages. Billy Fish was the first, and I can tell you we scared the soul out of him. It was not in any way according to Ritual, but it served our turn. We didn't raise more than ten of the biggest men, because we didn't want to make the Degree common. And they was clamouring to be raised.

" 'In another six months,' says Dravot, 'we'll hold another Communication, and see how you are working.' Then he asks them about their villages, and learns that they was fighting one against the other, and were sick and tired of it. And when they wasn't doing that they was fighting with the Mohammedans. 'You can fight those when they come into our country,' says Dravot. 'Tell off every tenth man of your tribes for a Frontier guard, and send two hundred at a time to his valley to be drilled. Nobody is going to be shot or speared any more so long as he does well, and I know that you won't cheat me, because you're white people—sons of Alexander—and not like common, black Mohammedans. You are *my* people, and by God,' says he, run-

ning off into English at the end—'I'll make a damned fine Nation of you, or I'll die in the making!'

"I can't tell all we did for the next six months, because Dravot did a lot I couldn't see the hang of, and he learned their lingo in a way I never could. My work was to help the people plough, and now and again go out with some of the Army and see what the other villages were doing, and make 'em throw rope-bridges across the ravines which cut up the country horrid. Dravot was very kind to me, but when he walked up and down in the pine wood pulling that bloody red beard of his with both fists I knew he was thinking plans I could not advise about, and I just waited for orders.

"But Dravot never showed me disrespect before the people. They were afraid of me and the Army, but they loved Dan. He was the best of friends with the priests and the Chiefs; but anyone could come across the hills with a complaint, and Dravot would hear him out fair, and call four priests together and say what was to be done. He used to call in Billy Fish from Bashkai, and Pikky Kergan from Shu, and an old Chief we called Kafuzelum—it was like enough to his real name—and hold councils with 'em when there was any fighting to be done in small villages. That was his Council of War, and the four priests of Bashkai, Shu, Khawak, and Madora was his Privy Council. Between the lot of 'em they sent me, with forty men and twenty rifles, and sixty men carrying turquoises, into the Ghorband country to buy those hand-made Martini rifles, that come out of the Amir's workshops at Kabul, from one of the Amir's Herati regiments that would have sold the very teeth out of their mouths for turquoises.

"I stayed in Ghorband a month, and gave the Governor there the pick of my baskets for hush-money, and bribed the Colonel of the regiment some more, and, between the two and the tribes-people, we got more than a hundred hand-made Martinis, a hundred good Kohat Jezails that'll throw to six hundred yards, and forty manloads of very bad ammunition for the rifles. I came back with what I had, and distributed 'em among the men that the Chiefs sent in to me to drill. Dravot was too busy to attend to those things, but the old Army that we first made helped me, and we turned out five hundred men that could drill, and two hundred that knew how to hold arms pretty straight. Even those cork-screwed, hand-made guns was a miracle

to them. Dravot talked big about powder-shops and factories, walking up and down in the pine wood when the winter was coming on.

" 'I won't make a Nation,' says he. 'I'll make an Empire! These men aren't niggers; they're English! Look at their eyes—look at their mouths. Look at the way they stand up. They sit on chairs in their own houses. They're the Lost Tribes, or something like it, and they've grown to be English. I'll take a census in the spring if the priests don't get frightened. There must be a fair two million of 'em in these hills. The villages are full o' little children. Two million people—two hundred and fifty thousand fighting men—and all English! They only want the rifles and a little drilling. Two hundred and fifty thousand men, ready to cut in on Russia's right flank when she tries for India! Peachey, man,' he says, chewing his beard in great hunks, 'we shall be Emperors—Emperors of the Earth! Rajah Brooke will be a suckling to us. I'll treat with the Viceroy on equal terms. I'll ask him to send me twelve picked English—twelve that I know of—to help us govern a bit. There's Mackray, Sergeant-pensioner at Segowli—many's the good dinner he's given me, and his wife a pair of trousers. There's Donkin, the Warder of Tounghoo Jail; there's hundreds that I could lay my hand on if I was in India. The Viceroy shall do it for me, I'll send a man through in the spring for those men, and I'll write for a dispensation from the Grand Lodge for what I've done as Grand-Master. That—and all the Sniders that'll be thrown out when the native troops in India take up the Martini. They'll be worn smooth, but they'll do for fighting in these hills. Twelve English, a hundred thousand Sniders run through the Amir's country in driblets—I'd be content with twenty thousand in one year—and we'd be an Empire. When everything was shipshape, I'd hand over the crown—this crown I'm wearing now—to Queen Victoria on my knees, and she'd say: "Rise up, Sir Daniel Dravot." Oh, it's big! It's big, I tell you! But there's so much to be done in every place—Bashkai, Khawak, Shu, and everywhere else.'

" 'What is it?' I says. 'There are no more men coming in to be drilled this autumn. Look at those fat, black clouds. They're bringing the snow.'

" 'It isn't that,' says Daniel, putting his hand very hard on my shoulder; 'and I don't wish to say anything that's against you, for no other living man would have followed me and made me what I am

as you have done. You're a first-class Commander-in-Chief, and the people know you; but—it's a big country, and somehow you can't help me, Peachey, in the way I want to be helped.'

"'Go to your blasted priests, then!' I said, and I was sorry when I made that remark, but it did hurt me sore to find Daniel talking so superior when I'd drilled all the men, and done all he told me.

"'Don't let's quarrel, Peachey,' says Daniel without cursing. 'You're a King too, and the half of this Kingdom is yours; but can't you see, Peachey, we want cleverer men than us now—three or four of 'em, that we can scatter about for our Deputies. It's a hugeous great State, and I can't always tell the right thing to do, and I haven't time for all I want to do, and here's the winter coming on and all.' He put half his beard into his mouth, all red like the gold of his crown.

"'I'm sorry, Daniel,' says I. 'I've done all I could. I've drilled the men and shown the people how to stack their oats better; and I've brought in those tin-ware rifles from Ghorband—but I know what you're driving at. I take it Kings always feel oppressed that way.'

"'There's another thing too,' says Dravot, walking up and down. 'The winter's coming and these people won't be giving much trouble, and if they do we can't move about. I want a wife.'

"'For Gord's sake leave the women alone!' I says. 'We've both got all the work we can, though I *am* a fool. Remember the Contract, and keep clear o' women.'

"'The Contract only lasted till such time as we was Kings; and Kings we have been these months past,' says Dravot, weighing his crown in his hand. 'You go get a wife too, Peachey—a nice, strappin', plump girl that'll keep you warm in the winter. They're prettier than English girls, and we can take the pick of 'em. Boil 'em once or twice in hot water, and they'll come out like chicken and ham.'

"'Don't tempt me!' I says. 'I will not have any dealings with a woman not till we are a dam' side more settled than we are now. I've been doing the work o' two men, and you've been doing the work o' three. Let's lie off a bit, and see if we can get some better tobacco from Afghan country and run in some good liquor; but no women.'

"'Who's talking o' *women*?' says Dravot. 'I said *wife*—a queen to breed a King's son for the King. A Queen out of the strongest tribe, that'll make them your blood-brothers, and that'll lie by your

side and tell you all the people thinks about you and their own affairs. That's what I want.'

" 'Do you remember that Bengali woman I kept at Mogul Serai when I was a plate-layer?' says I. 'A fat lot o' good she was to me. She taught me the lingo and one or two other things; but what happened? She ran away with the Station Master's servant and half my month's pay. Then she turned up at Dadur Junction in tow of a half-caste, and had the impidence to say I was her husband—all among the drivers in the running-shed too!'

" 'We've done with that,' says Dravot, 'these women are whiter than you or me, and a Queen I will have for the winter months.'

" 'For the last time o' asking, Dan, do *not*,' I says. 'It'll only bring us harm. The Bible says that Kings ain't to waste their strength on women, 'specially when they've got a new raw Kingdom to work over.'

" 'For the last time of answering I will,' said Dravot, and he went away through the pine-trees looking like a big red devil, the sun being on his crown and beard and all.

"But getting a wife was not as easy as Dan thought. He put it before the Council, and there was no answer till Billy Fish said he'd better ask the girls. Dravot damned them all round. 'What's wrong with me?' he shouts, standing by the idol Imbra. 'Am I a dog or am I not enough of a man for your wenches? Haven't I put the shadow of my hand over this country? Who stopped the last Afghan raid?' It was me really, but Dravot was too angry to remember. 'Who bought your guns? Who repaired the bridges? Who's the Grand-Master of the sign cut in the stone?' says he, and he thumped his hand on the block that he used to sit on in Lodge, and at Council, which opened like Lodge always. Billy Fish said nothing and no more did the others. 'Keep your hair on, Dan,' said I; 'and ask the girls. That's how it's done at Home, and these people are quite English.'

" 'The marriage of the King is a matter of State,' says Dan, in a white-hot rage, for he could feel, I hope, that he was going against his better mind. He walked out of the Council-room, and the others sat still, looking at the ground.

" 'Billy Fish,' says I to the Chief of Bashkai, 'what's the difficulty here? A straight answer to a true friend.'

" 'You know,' says Billy Fish. 'How should a man tell you who

knows everything? How can daughters of men marry Gods or Devils? It's not proper.'

"I remember something like that in the Bible; but if, after seeing us as long as they had, they still believed we were Gods, it wasn't for me to undeceive them.

" 'A God can do anything,' says I. 'If the King is fond of a girl he'll not let her die.'—'She'll have to,' said Billy Fish. 'There are all sorts of Gods and Devils in these mountains, and now and again a girl marries one of them and isn't seen any more. Besides, you two know the Mark cut in the stone. Only the Gods know that. We thought you were men till you showed the sign of the Master.'

"I wished then that we had explained about the loss of the genuine secrets of a Master-Mason at the first go-off; but I said nothing. All that night there was a blowing of horns in a little dark temple halfway down the hill, and I heard a girl crying fit to die. One of the priests told us that she was being prepared to marry the King.

" 'I'll have no nonsense of that kind,' says Dan. 'I don't want to interfere with your customs, but I'll take my own wife.'—'The girl's a little bit afraid,' says the priest. 'She thinks she's going to die, and they are a-heartening of her up down in the temple.'

" 'Hearten her very tender, then,' says Dravot, 'or I'll hearten you with the butt of a gun so you'll never want to be heartened again.' He licked his lips, did Dan, and stayed up walking about more than half the night, thinking of the wife that he was going to get in the morning. I wasn't by any means comfortable, for I knew that dealings with a woman in foreign parts, though you was a crowned King twenty times over, could not but be risky. I got up very early in the morning while Dravot was asleep, and I saw the priests talking together in whispers, and the Chiefs talking together too, and they looked at me out of the corners of their eyes.

" 'What is up, Fish?' I say to the Bashkai man, who was wrapped up in his furs and looking splendid to behold.

" 'I can't rightly say,' says he; 'but if you can make the King drop all this nonsense about marriage, you'll be doing him and me and yourself a great service.'

" 'That I do believe,' says I. 'But sure, you know, Billy, as well as me, having fought against and for us, that the King and me are

nothing more than two of the finest men that God Almighty ever made. Nothing more, I do assure you.'

"'That may be,' says Billy Fish, 'and yet I should be sorry if it was.' He sinks his head upon his great fur cloak for a minute and thinks. 'King,' says he, 'be you man or God or Devil, I'll stick by you today. I have twenty of my men with me, and they will follow me. We'll go to Bashkai until the storm blows over.'

"A little snow had fallen in the night, and everything was white except the greasy fat clouds that blew down and down from the north. Dravot came out with his crown on his head, swinging his arms and stamping his feet, and looking more pleased than Punch.

"'For the last time, drop it, Dan,' says I in a whisper, 'Billy Fish here says that there will be a row.'

"'A row among my people!' says Dravot. 'Not much. Peachey, you're a fool not to get a wife too. Where's the girl?' says he with a voice as loud as the braying of a jackass. 'Call up all the Chiefs and priests, and let the Emperor see if his wife suits him.'

"There was no need to call any one. They were all there leaning on their guns and spears round the clearing in the centre of the pine wood. A lot of priests went down to the little temple to bring up the girl, and the horns blew fit to wake the dead. Billy Fish saunters round and gets as close to Daniel as he could, and behind him stood his twenty men with matchlocks. Not a man of them under six feet. I was next to Dravot, and behind me was twenty men of the regular Army. Up comes the girl, and a strapping wench she was, covered with silver and turquoises but white as death, and looking back every minute at the priests.

"'She'll do,' said Dan, looking her over. 'What's to be afraid of, lass? Come and kiss me.' He puts his arm round her. She shuts her eyes, gives a bit of a squeak, and down goes her face in the side of Dan's flaming red beard.

"'The slut's bitten me!' says he, clapping his hand to his neck, and, sure enough, his hand was red with blood. Billy Fish and two of his matchlock-men catches hold of Dan by the shoulders and drags him into the Bashkai lot, while the priests howls in their lingo,—'Neither God nor Devil but a man!' I was all taken aback, for a priest cut at me in front, and the Army began firing into the Bashkai men.

"'God A'mighty!' says Dan. 'What is the meaning o' this?'

"'Come back! Come away!' says Billy Fish. 'Ruin and Mutiny is the matter. We'll break for Bashkai if we can.'

"I tried to give some sort of orders to my men—the men o' the regular Army—but it was no use, so I fired into the brown of 'em with an English Martini and drilled three beggars in a line. The valley was full of shouting, howling creatures, and every soul was shrieking, 'Not a God nor a Devil but only a man!' The Bashkai troops stuck to Billy Fish all they were worth, but their matchlocks wasn't half as good as the Kabul breech-loaders, and four of them dropped. Dan was bellowing like a bull, for he was very wrathy; and Billy Fish had a hard job to prevent him running out at the crowd.

"'We can't stand,' says Billy Fish. 'Make a run for it down the valley! The whole place is against us.' The matchlock-men ran, and we went down the valley in spite of Dravot. He was swearing horrible and crying out he was a King. The priests rolled great stones on us, and the regular Army fired hard, and there wasn't more than six men, not counting Dan, Billy Fish, and Me, that came down to the bottom of the valley alive.

"Then they stopped firing and the horns in the temple blew again. 'Come away—for Gord's sake come away!' says Billy Fish. 'They'll send runners out to all the villages before ever we get to Bashkai. I can protect you there, but I can't do anything now.'

"My own notion is that Dan began to go mad in his head from that hour. He stared up and down like a stuck pig. Then he was all for walking back alone and killing the priests with his bare hands; which he could have done. 'An Emperor am I,' says Daniel, 'and next year I shall be a Knight of the Queen.'

"'All right, Dan,' says I; 'but come along now while there's time.'

"'It's your fault,' says he, 'for not looking after your Army better. There was mutiny in the midst, and you didn't know—you damned engine-driving, plate-laying, missionary's-pass-hunting hound!' He sat upon a rock and called me every foul name he could lay tongue to. I was too heart-sick to care, though it was all his foolishness that brought the smash.

"'I'm sorry, Dan,' says I, 'but there's no accounting for natives. This business is our Fifty-seven. Maybe we'll make something out of it yet, when we've got to Bashkai.'

" 'Let's get to Bashkai, then,' says Dan, 'and, by God, when I come back here again I'll sweep the valley so there isn't a bug in a blanket left!'

"We walked all that day, and all that night Dan was stumping up and down on the snow, chewing his beard and muttering to himself.

" 'There's no hope o' getting clear,' said Billy Fish. 'The priests will have sent runners to the villages to say that you are only men. Why didn't you stick on as Gods till things was more settled? I'm a dead man,' says Billy Fish, and he throws himself down on the snow and begins to pray to his Gods.

"Next morning we was in a cruel bad country—all up and down, no level ground at all, and no food either. The six Bashkai men looked at Billy Fish hungry-way as if they wanted to ask something, but they said never a word. At noon we came to the top of a flat mountain all covered with snow, and when we climbed up into it, behold, there was an Army in position waiting in the middle!

" 'The runners have been very quick,' says Billy Fish, with a little bit of a laugh. 'They are waiting for us.'

"Three or four men began to fire from the enemy's side, and a chance shot took Daniel in the calf of the leg. That brought him to his senses. He looks across the snow at the Army, and sees the rifles that we had brought into the country.

" 'We're done for,' says he. 'They are Englishmen, these people,—and it's my blasted nonsense that has brought you to this. Get back, Billy Fish, and take your men away; you've done what you could, and now cut for it. Carnehan,' says he, 'shake hands with me and go along with Billy. Maybe they won't kill you. I'll go and meet 'em alone. It's me that did it. Me, the King!'

" 'Go!' says I. 'Go to Hell, Dan. I'm with you here. Billy Fish, you clear out, and we two will meet those folk.'

" 'I'm a Chief,' says Billy Fish, quite quiet. 'I stay with you. My men can go.'

"The Bashkai fellows didn't wait for a second word but ran off, and Dan and Me and Billy Fish walked across to where the drums were drumming and the horns were horning. It was cold—awful cold. I've got that cold in the back of my head now. There's a lump of it there."

The punkah-coolies had gone to sleep. Two kerosene lamps were blazing in the office, and the perspiration poured down my face and

splashed on the blotter as I leaned forward. Carnehan was shivering, and I feared that his mind might go. I wiped my face, took a fresh grip of the piteously mangled hands, and said, "What happened after that?"

The momentary shift of my eyes had broken the clear current.

"What was you pleased to say?" whined Carnehan. "They took them without any sound. Not a little whisper all along the snow, not though the King knocked down the first man that set hand on him—not though old Peachey fired his last cartridge into the brown of 'em. Not a single solitary sound did those swines make. They just closed up tight, and I tell you their furs stunk. There was a man called Billy Fish, a good friend of us all, and they cut his throat, Sir, then and there, like a pig; and the King kicks up the bloody snow and says: 'We've had a dashed fine run for our money. What's coming next?' But Peachey, Peachey Taliaferro, I tell you, Sir, in confidence as betwixt two friends, he lost his head, Sir. No, he didn't neither. The King lost his head, so he did, all along o' one of those cunning rope-bridges. Kindly let me have the paper-cutter, Sir. It tilted this way. They marched him a mile across that snow to a rope-bridge over a ravine with a river at the bottom. You may have seen such. They prodded him behind like an ox. 'Damn your eyes!' says the King. 'D'you suppose I can't die like a gentleman?' He turns to Peachey—Peachey that was crying like a child. 'I've brought you to this, Peachey,' says he. 'Brought you out of your happy life to be killed in Kafiristan where you was late Commander-in-Chief of the Emperor's forces. Say you forgive me, Peachey.'—'I do,' says Peachey. 'Fully and freely do I forgive you, Dan.'—'Shake hands, Peachey,' says he. 'I'm going now.' Out he goes, looking neither right nor left, and when he was plumb in the middle of those dizzy dancing ropes,—'Cut, you beggars,' he shouts, and they cut, and old Dan fell, turning round and round and round, twenty thousand miles, for he took half an hour to fall till he struck the water, and I could see his body caught on a rock with the gold crown close beside.

"But do you know what they did to Peachey between two pine-trees? They crucified him, Sir, as Peachey's hands will show. They used wooden pegs for his hands and his feet; and he didn't die. He hung there and screamed, and they took him down next day, and said it was a miracle that he wasn't dead. They took him down—poor

old Peachey that hadn't done them any harm—that hadn't done them any—"

He rocked to and fro and wept bitterly, wiping his eyes with the back of his scarred hands and moaning like a child for some ten minutes.

"They was cruel enough to feed him up in the temple, because they said he was more of a God than old Daniel that was a man. Then they turned him out on the snow, and told him to go home, and Peachey came home in about a year, begging along the roads quite safe; for Daniel Dravot he walked before and said: 'Come along, Peachey. It's a big thing we're doing.' The mountains they danced at night, and the mountains they tried to fall on Peachey's head, but Dan he held up his hand, and Peachey came along bent double. He never let go of Dan's hand, and he never let go of Dan's head. They gave it to him as a present in the temple, to remind him not to come again, and though the crown was pure gold, and Peachey was starving, never would Peachey sell the same. You knew Dravot, Sir! You knew Right Worshipful Brother Dravot! Look at him now!"

He fumbled in the mass of rags round his bent waist; brought out a black horsehair bag embroidered with silver thread; and shook therefrom on to my table—the dried, withered head of Daniel Dravot! The morning sun that had long been paling the lamps struck the red beard and blind sunken eyes; struck, too, a heavy circlet of gold studded with raw turquoises, that Carnehan placed tenderly on the battered temples.

"You be'old now," said Carnehan, "the Emperor in his 'abit as he lived—the King of Kafiristan with his crown upon his head. Poor old Daniel that was a monarch once!"

I shuddered, for, in spite of defacements manifold, I recognised the head of the man of Marwar Junction. Carnehan rose to go. I attempted to stop him. He was not fit to walk abroad. "Let me take away the whiskey, and give me a little money," he gasped. "I was a King once. I'll go to the Deputy Commissioner and ask to set in the Poorhouse till I get my health. No, thank you, I can't wait till you get a carriage for me. I've urgent private affairs—in the south —at Marwar."

He shambled out of the office and departed in the direction of the Deputy Commissioner's house. That day at noon I had occasion to

go down the blinding hot Mall, and I saw a crooked man crawling along the white dust of the roadside, his hat in his hand, quavering dolorously after the fashion of street-singers at Home. There was not a soul in sight, and he was out of all possible earshot of the houses. And he sang through his nose, turning his head from right to left:—

"The Son of Man goes forth to war,
A golden crown to gain;
His blood-red banner streams afar—
Who follows in his train?"

I waited to hear no more, but put the poor wretch into my carriage and drove him off to the nearest missionary for eventual transfer to the Asylum. He repeated the hymn twice while he was with me whom he did not in the least recognise, and I left him singing it to the missionary.

Two days later I enquired after his welfare of the Superintendent of the Asylum.

"He was admitted suffering from sun-stroke. He died early yesterday morning," said the Superintendent. "Is it true that he was half an hour bare-headed in the sun at midday?"

"Yes," said I, "but do you happen to know if he had anything upon him by any chance when he died?"

"Not to my knowledge," said the Superintendent.

And there the matter rests.

The Mummy's Foot

BY THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

(*1811-1872*)

TRANSLATED BY LAFCADIO HEARN

I HAD entered, in an idle mood, the shop of one of those curiosity venders who are called *marchands de bric-à-brac* in that Parisian *argot* which is so perfectly unintelligible elsewhere in France.

You have doubtless glanced occasionally through the windows of some of these shops, which have become so numerous now that it is fashionable to buy antiquated furniture, and now that every petty stockbroker thinks he must have his *chambre au moyen âge.*

There is one thing there which clings alike to the shop of the dealer in old iron, the wareroom of the tapestry maker, the laboratory of the chemist, and the studio of the painter: in all those gloomy dens where a furtive daylight filters in through the window-shutters, the most manifestly ancient thing is dust. The cobwebs are more authentic than the guimpe laces, and the old pear-tree furniture on exhibition is actually younger than the mahogany which arrived but yesterday from America.

The warehouse of my bric-à-brac dealer was a veritable Capharnaum. All ages and all nations seemed to have made their rendezvous there. An Etruscan lamp of red clay stood upon a Boule cabinet, with ebony panels, brightly striped by lines of inlaid brass; a duchess of the court of Louis XV. nonchalantly extended her fawn-like feet under a massive table of the time of Louis XIII., with heavy spiral supports of oak, and carven designs of chimeras and foliage intermingled.

Upon the denticulated shelves of several sideboards glittered immense Japanese dishes with red and blue designs relieved by gilded hatching, side by side with enamelled works by Bernard Palissy, representing serpents, frogs, and lizards in relief.

From disemboweled cabinets escaped cascades of silver-lustrous Chinese silks and waves of tinsel, which an oblique sunbeam shot through with luminous beads, while portraits of every era, in frames more or less tarnished, smiled through yellow varnish.

The striped breastplate of a damascened suit of Milanese armour glittered in one corner; lovers and nymphs of porcelain, Chinese grotesques, vases of *céladon* and crackle-ware, Saxon and old Sèvres cups encumbered the shelves and nooks of the apartment.

The dealer followed me closely through the tortuous way contrived between the piles of furniture, warding off with his hand the hazardous sweep of my coat-skirts, watching my elbows with the uneasy attention of an antiquarian and a usurer.

It was a singular face, that of the merchant; an immense skull, polished like a knee, and surrounded by a thin aureole of white hair, which brought out the clear salmon tint of his complexion all the more strikingly, lent him a false aspect of patriarchal *bonhomie*, counteracted, however, by the scintillation of two little yellow eyes which trembled in their orbits like two louis-d'or upon quicksilver. The curve of his nose presented an aquiline silhouette, which suggested the Oriental or Jewish type. His hands—thin, slender, full of nerves which projected like strings upon the finger-board of a violin, and armed with claws like those on the terminations of bats' wings—shook with senile trembling; but those convulsively agitated hands became firmer than steel pincers or lobsters' claws when they lifted any precious article—an onyx cup, a Venetian glass, or a dish of Bohemian crystal. This strange old man had an aspect so thoroughly rabbinical and cabalistic that he would have been burnt on the mere testimony of his face three centuries ago.

"Will you not buy something from me today, sir? Here is a Malay kreese with a blade undulating like a flame. Look at those grooves contrived for the blood to run along, those teeth set backward so as to tear out the entrails in withdrawing the weapon. It is a fine character of ferocious arm, and will look well in your collection. This two-handed sword is very beautiful. It is the work of Joseph de la Hera; and this *coliche-marde*, with its fenestrated guard—what a superb specimen of handicraft!"

"No; I have quite enough weapons and instruments of carnage. I want a small figure, something which will suit me as a paper-weight,

for I cannot endure those trumpery bronzes which the stationers sell, and which may be found on everybody's desk."

The old gnome foraged among his ancient wares, and finally arranged before me some antique bronzes, so-called at least; fragments of malachite, little Hindoo or Chinese idols, a kind of poussah-toys in jade-stone, representing the incarnations of Brahma or Vishnoo, and wonderfully appropriate to the very undivine office of holding papers and letters in place.

I was hesitating between a porcelain dragon, all constellated with warts, its mouth formidable with bristling tusks and ranges of teeth, and an abominable little Mexican fetich, representing the god Vitzili-putzili *au naturel*, when I caught sight of a charming foot, which I at first took for a fragment of some antique Venus.

It had those beautiful ruddy and tawny tints that lend to Florentine bronze that warm, living look so much preferable to the gray-green aspect of common bronzes, which might easily be mistaken for statues in a state of putrefaction. Satiny gleams played over its rounded forms, doubtless polished by the amorous kisses of twenty centuries, for it seemed a Corinthian bronze, a work of the best era of art, perhaps moulded by Lysippus himself.

"That foot will be my choice," I said to the merchant, who regarded me with an ironical and saturnine air, and held out the object desired that I might examine it more fully.

I was surprised at its lightness. It was not a foot of metal, but in sooth a foot of flesh, an embalmed foot, a mummy's foot. On examining it still more closely the very grain of the skin, and the almost imperceptible lines impressed upon it by the texture of the bandages, became perceptible. The toes were slender and delicate, and terminated by perfectly formed nails, pure and transparent as agates. The great toe, slightly separated from the rest, afforded a happy contrast, in the antique style, to the position of the other toes, and lent it an aërial lightness—the grace of a bird's foot. The sole, scarcely streaked by a few almost imperceptible cross lines, afforded evidence that it had never touched the bare ground, and had come in contact with only the finest matting of Nile rushes and the softest carpets of panther skin.

"Ha, ha, you want the foot of the Princess Hermonthis!" exclaimed the merchant, with a strange giggle, fixing his owlish eyes upon me. "Ha, ha, ha! For a paper-weight! An original idea!—an artistic idea!

Old Pharaoh would certainly have been surprised had someone told him that the foot of his adored daughter would be used for a paper-weight after he had had a mountain of granite hollowed out as a receptacle for the triple coffin, painted and gilded, covered with hieroglyphics and beautiful paintings of the Judgement of Souls," continued the queer little merchant, half audibly, as though talking to himself.

"How much will you charge me for this mummy fragment?"

"Ah, the highest price I can get, for it is a superb piece. If I had the match of it you could not have it for less than five hundred francs. The daughter of a Pharaoh! Nothing is more rare."

"Assuredly that is not a common article, but still, how much do you want? In the first place let me warn you that all my wealth consists of just five louis. I can buy anything that costs five louis, but nothing dearer. You might search my vest pockets and most secret drawers without finding even one poor five-franc piece more."

"Five louis for the foot of the Princes Hermonthis! That is very little, very little indeed. 'Tis an authentic foot," muttered the merchant, shaking his head, and imparting a peculiar rotary motion to his eyes. "Well, take it, and I will give you the bandages into the bargain," he added, wrapping the foot in an ancient damask rag. "Very fine! Real damask—Indian damask which has never been redyed. It is strong, and yet it is soft," he mumbled, stroking the frayed tissue with his fingers, through the trade-acquired habit which moved him to praise even an object of such little value that he himself deemed it only worth the giving away.

He poured the gold coins into a sort of mediæval almspurse hanging at his belt, repeating:

"The foot of the Princess Hermonthis to be used for a paper-weight!"

Then, turning his phosphorescent eyes upon me, he exclaimed in a voice strident as the crying of a cat which has swallowed a fish-bone:

"Old Pharaoh will not be well pleased. He loved his daughter, the dear man!"

"You speak as if you were a contemporary of his. You are old enough, goodness knows! but you do not date back to the Pyramids of Egypt," I answered, laughingly, from the threshold.

I went home, delighted with my acquisition.

With the idea of putting it to profitable use as soon as possible, I

placed the foot of the divine Princess Hermonthis upon a heap of papers scribbled over with verses, in themselves an undecipherable mosaic work of erasures; articles freshly begun; letters forgotten, and posted in the table drawer instead of the letter-box, an error to which absent-minded people are peculiarly liable. The effect was charming, *bizarre,* and romantic.

Well satisfied with this embellishment, I went out with the gravity and pride becoming one who feels that he has the ineffable advantage over all the passers-by whom he elbows, of possessing a piece of the Princess Hermonthis, daughter of Pharaoh.

I looked upon all who did not possess, like myself, a paper-weight so authentically Egyptian, as very ridiculous people, and it seemed to me that the proper occupation of every sensible man should consist in the mere fact of having a mummy's foot upon his desk.

Happily I met some friends, whose presence distracted me from my infatuation with this new acquisition. I went to dinner with them, for I could not very well have dined with myself.

When I came back from that evening, with my brain slightly confused by a few glasses of wine, a vague whiff of Oriental perfume delicately titillated my olfactory nerves. The heat of the room had warmed the natron, bitumen, and myrrh in which the *paraschistes,* who cut open the bodies of the dead, had bathed the corpse of the princess. It was a perfume at once sweet and penetrating, a perfume that four thousand years had not been able to dissipate.

The Dream of Egypt was Eternity. Her odours have the solidity of granite and endure as long.

I soon drank deeply from the black cup of sleep. For a few hours all remained opaque to me. Oblivion and nothingness inundated me with their sombre waves.

Yet light gradually dawned upon the darkness of my mind. Dreams commenced to touch me softly in their silent flight.

The eyes of my soul were opened, and I beheld my chamber as it actually was. I might have believed myself awake but for a vague consciousness which assured me that I slept, and that something fantastic was about to take place.

The odour of the myrrh had augmented in intensity, and I felt a slight headache, which I very naturally attributed to several glasses

of champagne that we had drunk to the unknown gods and our future fortunes.

I peered through my room with a feeling of expectation which I saw nothing to justify. Every article of furniture was in its proper place. The lamp, softly shaded by its globe of ground crystal, burned upon its bracket; the water-colour sketches shone under their Bohemian glass; the curtains hung down languidly; everything wore an aspect of tranquil slumber.

After a few moments, however, all this calm interior appeared to become disturbed. The woodwork cracked stealthily, the ash-covered log suddenly emitted a jet of blue flame, and the disks of the pateras seemed like great metallic eyes, watching, like myself, for the things which were about to happen.

My eyes accidentally fell upon the desk where I had placed the foot of the Princess Hermonthis.

Instead of remaining quiet, as behooved a foot which had been embalmed for four thousand years, it commenced to act in a nervous manner, contracted itself, and leaped over the papers like a startled frog. One would have imagined that it had suddenly been brought into contact with a galvanic battery. I could distinctly hear the dry sound made by its little heel, hard as the hoof of a graceful gazelle.

I became rather discontented with my acquisition, inasmuch as I wished my paper-weights to be of a sedentary disposition, and thought it very unnatural that feet should walk about without legs, and I commenced to experience a feeling closely akin to fear.

Suddenly I saw the folds of my bed-curtain stir, and heard a bumping sound, like that caused by some person hopping on one foot across the floor. I must confess I became alternately hot and cold, that I felt a strange wind chill my back, and that my suddenly rising hair caused my night-cap to execute a leap of several yards.

The bed-curtains opened and I beheld the strangest figure imaginable before me.

It was a young girl of a very deep coffee-brown complexion, like the bayadere Amani, and possessing the purest Egyptian type of perfect beauty. Her eyes were almond-shaped and oblique, with eyebrows so black that they seemed blue; her nose was exquisitely chiselled, almost Greek in its delicacy of outline; and she might indeed have been taken for a Corinthian statue of bronze but for the prominence of her cheek-

bones and the slightly African fulness of her lips, which compelled one to recognize her as belonging beyond all doubt to the hieroglyphic race which dwelt upon the banks of the Nile.

Her arms, slender and spindle-shaped like those of very young girls, were encircled by a peculiar kind of metal bands and bracelets of glass beads; her hair was all twisted into little cords, and she wore upon her bosom a little idol-figure of green paste, bearing a whip with seven lashes, which proved it to be an image of Isis; her brow was adorned with a shining plate of gold, and a few traces of paint relieved the coppery tint of her cheeks.

As for her costume, it was very odd indeed.

Fancy a *pagne,* or skirt, all formed of little strips of material bedizened with red and black hieroglyphics, stiffened with bitumen, and apparently belonging to a freshly unbandaged mummy.

In one of those sudden flights of thought so common in dreams I heard the hoarse falsetto of the bric-à-brac dealer, repeating like a monotonous refrain the phrase he had uttered in his shop with so enigmatical an intonation:

"Old Pharaoh will not be well pleased. He loved his daughter, the dear man!"

One strange circumstance, which was not at all calculated to restore my equanimity, was that the apparition had but one foot; the other was broken off at the ankle!

She approached the table where the foot was starting and fidgeting about more than ever, and there supported herself upon the edge of the desk. I saw her eyes fill with pearly gleaming tears.

Although she had not as yet spoken, I fully comprehended the thoughts which agitated her. She looked at her foot—for it was indeed her own—with an exquisitely graceful expression of coquettish sadness, but the foot leaped and ran hither and thither, as though impelled on steel springs.

Twice or thrice she extended her hand to seize it, but could not succeed.

Then commenced between the Princess Hermonthis and her foot—which appeared to be endowed with a special life of its own—a very fantastic dialogue in a most ancient Coptic tongue, such as might have been spoken thirty centuries ago in the syrinxes of the land of Ser. Luckily, I understood Coptic perfectly well that night.

The Princess Hermonthis cried, in a voice sweet and vibrant as the tones of a crystal bell:

"Well, my dear little foot, you always flee from me, yet I always took good care of you. I bathed you with perfumed water in a bowl of alabaster; I smoothed your heel with pumice-stone mixed with palm oil; your nails were cut with golden scissors and polished with a hippopotamus tooth; I was careful to select *tatbebs* for you, painted and embroidered and turned up at the toes, which were the envy of all the young girls in Egypt. You wore on your great toe rings bearing the device of the sacred Scarabæus, and you supported one of the lightest bodies that a lazy foot could sustain."

The foot replied in a pouting and chagrined tone:

"You know well that I do not belong to myself any longer. I have been bought and paid for. The old merchant knew what he was about. He bore you a grudge for having refused to espouse him. This is an ill turn which he has done you. The Arab who violated your royal coffin in the subterranean pits of the necropolis of Thebes was sent thither by him. He desired to prevent you from being present at the reunion of the shadowy nations in the cities below. Have you five pieces of gold for my ransom?"

"Alas, no! My jewels, my rings, my purses of gold and silver were all stolen from me," answered the Princess Hermonthis, with a sob.

"Princess," I then exclaimed, "I never retained anybody's foot unjustly. Even though you have not got the five louis which it cost me, I present it to you gladly. I should feel unutterably wretched to think that I were the cause of so amiable a person as the Princess Hermonthis being lame."

I delivered this discourse in a royally gallant troubadour tone which must have astonished the beautiful Egyptian girl.

She turned a look of deepest gratitude upon me, and her eyes shone with bluish gleams of light.

She took her foot, which surrendered itself willingly this time, like a woman about to put on her little shoe, and adjusted it to her leg with much skill.

This operation over, she took a few steps about the room, as though to assure herself that she was really no longer lame.

"Ah, how pleased my father will be! He who was so unhappy because of my mutilation, and who from the moment of my birth set

a whole nation at work to hollow me out a tomb so deep that he might preserve me intact until that last day, when souls must be weighed in the balance of Amenthi! Come with me to my father. He will receive you kindly, for you have given me back my foot."

I thought this proposition natural enough. I arrayed myself in a dressing-gown of large-flowered pattern, which lent me a very Pharaonic aspect, hurriedly put on a pair of Turkish slippers, and informed the Princess Hermonthis that I was ready to follow her.

Before starting, Hermonthis took from her neck the little idol of green paste, and laid it on the scattered sheets of paper which covered the table.

"It is only fair," she observed, smilingly, "that I should replace your paper-weight."

She gave me her hand, which felt soft and cold like the skin of a serpent, and we departed.

We passed for some time with the velocity of an arrow through a fluid and grayish expanse, in which half-formed silhouettes flitted swiftly by us, to right and left.

For an instant we saw only sky and sea.

A few moments later obelisks commenced to tower in the distance; pylons and vast flights of steps guarded by sphinxes became clearly outlined against the horizon.

We had reached our destination.

The princess conducted me to a mountain of rose-coloured granite, in the face of which appeared an opening so narrow and low that it would have been difficult to distinguish it from the fissures in the rock, had not its location been marked by two stelæ wrought with sculptures.

Hermonthis kindled a torch and led the way before me.

We traversed corridors hewn through the living rock. Their walls, covered with hieroglyphics and paintings of allegorical processions, might well have occupied thousands of arms for thousands of years in their formation. These corridors of interminable length opened into square chambers, in the midst of which pits had been contrived, through which we descended by cramp-irons or spiral stairways. These pits again conducted us into other chambers, opening into other corridors, likewise decorated with painted sparrow-hawks, serpents coiled in circles, the symbols of the *tau* and *pedun*—prodigious works of art

which no living eye can ever examine—interminable legends of granite which only the dead have time to read through all eternity.

At last we found ourselves in a hall so vast, so enormous, so immeasurable, that the eye could not reach its limits. Files of monstrous columns stretched far out of sight on every side, between which twinkled livid stars of yellowish flame; points of light which revealed further depths incalculable in the darkness beyond.

The Princess Hermonthis still held my hand, and graciously saluted the mummies of her acquaintance.

My eyes became accustomed to the dim twilight, and objects became discernible.

I beheld the kings of the subterranean races seated upon thrones—grand old men, though dry, withered, wrinkled like parchment, and blackened with naphtha and bitumen—all wearing *pshents* of gold, and breastplates and gorgets glittering with precious stones, their eyes immovably fixed like the eyes of sphinxes, and their long beards whitened by the snow of centuries. Behind them stood their peoples, in the stiff and constrained posture enjoined by Egyptian art, all eternally preserving the attitude prescribed by the hieratic code. Behind these nations, the cats, ibises and crocodiles contemporary with them—rendered monstrous of aspect by their swathing bands—mewed, flapped their wings, or extended their jaws in a saurian giggle.

All the Pharaohs were here—Cheops, Chephrenes, Psammetichus, Sesostris, Amenotaph,—all the dark rulers of the pyramids and sphinxes. On yet higher thrones sat Chronos and Xixouthros, who was contemporary with the deluge, and Tubal Cain, who reigned before it.

The beard of King Xixouthros had grown seven times around the granite table, upon which he leaned, lost in deep reverie, and buried in dreams.

Farther back, through a dusty cloud, I beheld dimly the seventy-two preadamite kings, with their seventy-two peoples, forever passed away.

After permitting me to gaze upon this bewildering spectacle a few moments, the Princess Hermonthis presented me to her father, Pharaoh, who favoured me with a most gracious nod.

"I have found my foot again! I have found my foot!" cried the

princess, clapping her little hands together with every sign of frantic joy. "It was this gentleman who restored it to me."

The races of Kemi, the races of Nahasi—all the black, bronzed, and copper-coloured nations repeated in chorus:

"The Princess Hermonthis has found her foot again!"

Even Xixouthros himself was visibly affected.

He raised his heavy eyelids, stroked his mustache with his fingers, and turned upon me a glance weighty with centuries.

"By Oms, the dog of Hell, and Tmei, daughter of the Sun and of Truth, this is a brave and worthy lad!" exclaimed Pharaoh, pointing to me with his sceptre, which was terminated with a lotus-flower.

"What recompense do you desire?"

Filled with that daring inspired by dreams in which nothing seems impossible, I asked him for the hand of the Princess Hermonthis. The hand seemed to me a very proper antithetic recompense for the foot.

Pharaoh opened wide his great eyes of glass in astonishment at my witty request.

"What country do you come from, and what is your age?"

"I am a Frenchman, and I am twenty-seven years old, venerable Pharaoh."

"Twenty-seven years old, and he wishes to espouse the Princess Hermonthis, who is thirty centuries old!" cried out at once all the Thrones and all the Circles of Nations.

Only Hermonthis herself did not seem to think my request unreasonable.

"If you were even only two thousand years old," replied the ancient king, "I would willingly give you the princess, but the disproportion is too great; and, besides, we must give our daughters husbands who will last well. You do not know how to preserve yourselves any longer. Even those who died only fifteen centuries ago are already no more than a handful of dust. Behold, my flesh is solid as basalt, my bones are bars of steel!

"I will be present on the last day of the world with the same body and the same features which I had during my lifetime. My daughter Hermonthis will last longer than a statue of bronze.

"Then the last particles of your dust will have been scattered abroad by the winds, and even Isis herself, who was able to find the atoms of Osiris, would scarce be able to recompense your being.

"See how vigorous I yet remain, and how mighty is my grasp," he added, shaking my hand in the English fashion with a strength that buried my rings in the flesh of my fingers.

He squeezed me so hard that I awoke—and found my friend Alfred shaking me by the arm to make me get up.

"Oh, you everlasting sleeper! Must I have you carried out into the middle of the street, and fireworks exploded in your ears? It is afternoon. Don't you recollect your promise to take me with you to see M. Aguado's Spanish pictures?"

"God! I forgot all, all about it," I answered, dressing myself hurriedly. "We will go there at once. I have the permit lying there on my desk."

I started to find it, but fancy my astonishment when I beheld, instead of the mummy's foot I had purchased the evening before, the little green paste idol left in its place by the Princess Hermonthis!

A Prisoner in the Caucasus

BY LEO N. TOLSTOY

(*1828-1910*)

TRANSLATED BY LOUISE AND AYLMER MAUDE

I

AN officer named Zhílin was serving in the army in the Caucasus.

One day he received a letter from home. It was from his mother, who wrote: "I am getting old, and should like to see my dear son once more before I die. Come and say good-bye to me and bury me, and then, if God pleases, return to service again with my blessing. But I have found a girl for you, who is sensible and good and has some property. If you can love her, you might marry her and remain at home."

Zhílin thought it over. It was quite true, the old lady was failing fast and he might not have another chance to see her alive. He had better go, and, if the girl was nice, why not marry her?

So he went to his Colonel, obtained leave of absence, said good-bye to his comrades, stood the soldiers four pailfuls of vódka as a farewell treat, and got ready to go.

It was a time of war in the Caucasus. The roads were not safe by night or day. If ever a Russian ventured to ride or walk any distance away from his fort, the Tartars killed him or carried him off to the hills. So it had been arranged that twice every week a body of soldiers should march from one fortress to the next to convoy travelers from point to point.

It was summer. At daybreak the baggage-train got ready under shelter of the fortress; the soldiers marched out; and all started along the road. Zhílin was on horseback, and a cart with his things went with the baggage-train. They had sixteen miles to go. The baggage-

train moved slowly; sometimes the soldiers stopped, or perhaps a wheel would come off one of the carts, or a horse refuse to go on, and then everybody had to wait.

When by the sun it was already past noon, they had not gone half the way. It was dusty and hot, the sun was scorching, and there was no shelter anywhere: a bare plain all round—not a tree, not a bush, by the road.

Zhílin rode on in front, and stopped, waiting for the baggage to overtake him. Then he heard the signal-horn sounded behind him: the company had again stopped. So he began to think: "Hadn't I better ride on by myself? My horse is a good one: if the Tartars do attack me, I can gallop away. Perhaps, however, it would be wiser to wait."

As he sat considering, Kostílin, an officer carrying a gun, rode up to him and said:

"Come along, Zhílin, let's go on by ourselves. It's dreadful; I am famished, and the heat is terrible. My shirt is wringing wet."

Kostílin was a stout, heavy man, and the perspiration was running down his red face. Zhílin thought awhile, and then asked: "Is your gun loaded?"

"Yes, it is."

"Well, then, let's go, but on condition that we keep together."

So they rode forward along the road across the plain, talking, but keeping a look-out on both sides. They could see afar all round. But after crossing the plain the road ran through a valley between two hills, and Zhílin said: "We had better climb that hill and have a look round, or the Tartars may be on us before we know it."

But Kostílin answered: "What's the use? Let us go on."

Zhílin, however, would not agree.

"No," he said; "you can wait here if you like, but I'll go and look round." And he turned his horse to the left, up the hill. Zhílin's horse was a hunter, and carried him up the hillside as if it had wings. (He had bought it for a hundred roubles as a colt out of a herd, and had broken it in himself.) Hardly had he reached the top of the hill, when he saw some thirty Tartars not much more than a hundred yards ahead of him. As soon as he caught sight of them he turned round, but the Tartars had also seen him, and rushed after him at full gallop, getting their guns out as they went. Down galloped Zhílin as fast as the horse's legs could go, shouting to Kostílin: "Get your gun ready!"

And, in thought, he said to his horse: "Get me well out of this, my pet; don't stumble, for if you do it's all up. Once I reach the gun, they shan't take me prisoner."

But, instead of waiting, Kostílin, as soon as he caught sight of the Tartars, turned back toward the fortress at full speed, whipping his horse now on one side now on the other, and its switching tail was all that could be seen of him in the dust.

Zhílin saw it was a bad look-out; the gun was gone, and what could he do with nothing but his sword? He turned his horse toward the escort, thinking to escape, but there were six Tartars rushing to cut him off. His horse was a good one, but theirs were still better; and besides, they were across his path. He tried to rein in his horse and to turn another way, but it was going so fast it could not stop, and dashed on straight toward the Tartars. He saw a red-bearded Tartar on a gray horse, with his gun raised, come at him, yelling and showing his teeth.

"Ah," thought Zhílin, "I know you, devils that you are. If you take me alive, you'll put me in a pit and flog me. I will not be taken alive!"

Zhílin, though not a big fellow, was brave. He drew his sword and dashed at the red-bearded Tartar, thinking: "Either I'll ride him down, or disable him with my sword."

He was still a horse's length away from him, when he was fired at from behind, and his horse was hit. It fell to the ground with all its weight, pinning Zhílin to the earth.

He tried to rise, but two ill-savoured Tartars were already sitting on him and binding his hands behind his back. He made an effort and flung them off, but three others jumped from their horses and began beating his head with the butts of their guns. His eyes grew dim, and he fell back. The Tartars seized him, and, taking spare girths from their saddles, twisted his hands behind him and tied them with a Tartar knot. They knocked his cap off, pulled off his boots, searched him all over, tore his clothes, and took his money and his watch.

Zhílin looked round at his horse. There it lay on its side, poor thing, just as it had fallen; struggling, its legs in the air, unable to touch the ground. There was a hole in its head, and black blood was pouring out, turning the dust to mud for a couple of feet around.

One of the Tartars went up to the horse and began taking the saddle

off; it still kicked, so he drew a dagger and cut its windpipe. A whistling sound came from its throat, the horse gave one plunge, and all was over.

The Tartars took the saddle and trappings. The red-bearded Tartar mounted his horse, and the others lifted Zhílin into the saddle behind him. To prevent his falling off, they strapped him to the Tartar's girdle; and then they all rode away to the hills.

So there sat Zhílin, swaying from side to side, his head striking against the Tartar's stinking back. He could see nothing but that muscular back and sinewy neck, with its closely shaven, bluish nape. Zhílin's head was wounded: the blood had dried over his eyes, and he could neither shift his position on the saddle nor wipe the blood off. His arms were bound so tightly that his collar-bone ached.

They rode up and down hills for a long way. Then they reached a river which they forded, and came to a hard road leading across a valley.

Zhílin tried to see where they were going, but his eyelids were stuck together with blood, and he could not turn.

Twilight began to fall; they crossed another river, and rode up a stony hillside. There was a smell of smoke here, and dogs were barking. They had reached an aoul (a Tartar village). The Tartars got off their horses; Tartar children came and stood round Zhílin, shrieking with pleasure and throwing stones at him.

The Tartar drove the children away, took Zhílin off the horse, and called his man. A Nogáy with high cheek-bones, and nothing on but a shirt (and that so torn that his breast was all bare), answered the call. The Tartar gave him an order. He went and fetched shackles: two blocks of oak with iron rings attached, and a clasp and lock fixed to one of the rings.

They untied Zhílin's arms, fastened the shackles on his leg, and dragged him to a barn, where they pushed him in and locked the door.

Zhílin fell on a heap of manure. He lay still awhile, then groped about to find a soft place, and settled down.

II

That night Zhílin slept hardly at all. It was the time of year when the nights are short, and daylight soon showed itself through a chink in

the wall. He rose, scratched to make the chink bigger, and peeped out.

Through the hole he saw a road leading down-hill; to the right was a Tartar hut with two trees near it, a black dog lay on the threshold, and a goat and kids were moving about wagging their tails. Then he saw a young Tartar woman in a long, loose, bright-coloured gown, with trousers and high boots showing from under it. She had a coat thrown over her head, on which she carried a large metal jug filled with water. She was leading by the hand a small, closely-shaven Tartar boy, who wore nothing but a shirt; and as she went along balancing herself, the muscles of her back quivered. This woman carried the water into the hut, and soon after, the red-bearded Tartar of yesterday came out dressed in a silk tunic, with a silver-hilted dagger hanging by his side, shoes on his bare feet, and a tall black sheepskin cap set far back on his head. He came out, stretched himself, and stroked his red beard. He stood awhile, gave an order to his servant, and went away.

Then two lads rode past from watering their horses. The horses' noses were wet. Some other closely-shaven boys ran out, without any trousers, and wearing nothing but their shirts. They crowded together, came to the barn, picked up a twig, and began pushing it in at the chink. Zhílin gave a shout, and the boys shrieked and scampered off, their little bare knees gleaming as they ran.

Zhílin was very thirsty: his throat was parched, and he thought: "If only they would come and so much as look at me!"

Then he heard someone unlocking the barn. The red-bearded Tartar entered, and with him was another, a smaller man, dark, with bright black eyes, red cheeks, and a short beard. He had a merry face, and was always laughing. This man was even more richly dressed than the other. He wore a blue silk tunic trimmed with gold, a large silver dagger in his belt, red morocco slippers worked with silver, and over these a pair of thick shoes, and he had a white sheepskin cap on his head.

The red-bearded Tartar entered, muttered something as if he were annoyed, and stood leaning against the doorpost, playing with his dagger, and glaring askance at Zhílin, like a wolf. The dark one, quick and lively, and moving as if on springs, came straight up to Zhílin, squatted down in front of him, slapped him on the shoulder, and began to talk very fast in his own language. His teeth showed, and he kept winking, clicking his tongue, and repeating, "Good Russ, good Russ."

Zhílin could not understand a word, but said, "Drink! give me water to drink!"

The dark man only laughed. "Good Russ," he said, and went on talking in his own tongue.

Zhílin made signs with lips and hands that he wanted something to drink.

The dark man understood, and laughed. Then he looked out of the door, and called to someone: "Dina!"

A little girl came running in: she was about thirteen, slight, thin, and like the dark Tartar in face. Evidently she was his daughter. She, too, had clear black eyes, and her face was good-looking. She had on a long blue gown with wide sleeves, and no girdle. The hem of her gown, the front, and the sleeves, were trimmed with red. She wore trousers and slippers, and over the slippers stouter shoes with high heels. Round her neck she had a necklace made of Russian silver coins. She was bareheaded, and her black hair was plaited with a ribbon and ornamented with gilt braid and silver coins.

Her father gave an order, and she ran away and returned with a metal jug. She handed the water to Zhílin and sat down, crouching so that her knees were as high as her head; and there she sat with wide open eyes watching Zhílin drink, as though he were a wild animal.

When Zhílin handed the empty jug back to her, she gave such a sudden jump back, like a wild goat, that it made her father laugh. He sent her away for something else. She took the jug, ran out, and brought back some unleavened bread on a round board, and once more sat down, crouching, and looking on with staring eyes.

Then the Tartars went away and again locked the door.

After a while the Nogáy came and said: "*Ayda* the master, *Ayda!*"

He, too, knew no Russian. All Zhílin could make out was that he was told to go somewhere.

Zhílin followed the Nogáy, but limped, for the shackles dragged his feet so that he could hardly step at all. On getting out of the barn he saw a Tartar village of about ten houses, and a Tartar church with a small tower. Three horses stood saddled before one of the houses; little boys were holding them by the reins. The dark Tartar came out of this house, beckoning with his hand for Zhílin to follow him. Then he laughed, said something in his own language, and returned into the house.

Zhílin entered. The room was a good one: the walls smoothly plastered with clay. Near the front wall lay a pile of bright-coloured feather beds; the side walls were covered with rich carpets used as hangings, and on these were fastened guns, pistols and swords, all inlaid with silver. Close to one of the walls was a small stove on a level with the earthen floor. The floor itself was as clean as a threshing-ground. A large space in one corner was spread over with felt, on which were rugs, and on these rugs were cushions stuffed with down. And on these cushions sat five Tartars, the dark one, the red-haired one, and three guests. They were wearing their indoor slippers, and each had a cushion behind his back. Before them were standing millet cakes on a round board, melted butter in a bowl, and a jug of *buza*, or Tartar beer. They ate both cakes and butter with their hands.

The dark man jumped up and ordered Zhílin to be placed on one side, not on the carpet but on the bare ground, then he sat down on the carpet again, and offered millet cakes and *buza* to his guests. The servant made Zhílin sit down, after which he took off his own overshoes, put them by the door where the other shoes were standing, and sat down nearer to his masters on the felt, watching them as they ate, and licking his lips.

The Tartars ate as much as they wanted, and a woman dressed in the same way as the girl—in a long gown and trousers, with a kerchief on her head—came and took away what was left, and brought a handsome basin, and an ewer with a narrow spout. The Tartars washed their hands, folded them, went down on their knees, blew to the four quarters, and said their prayers. After they had talked for a while, one of the guests turned to Zhílin and began to speak in Russian.

"You were captured by Kazi-Mohammed," he said, and pointed at the red-bearded Tartar. "And Kazi-Mohammed has given you to Abdul Murat," pointing at the dark one. "Abdul Murat is now your master."

Zhílin was silent. Then Abdul Murat began to talk, laughing, pointing to Zhílin, and repeating, "Soldier Russ, good Russ."

The interpreter said, "He orders you to write home and tell them to send a ransom, and as soon as the money comes he will set you free."

Zhílin thought for a moment, and said, "How much ransom does he want?"

The Tartars talked awhile, and then the interpreter said, "Three thousand roubles."

"No," said Zhílin, "I can't pay so much."

Abdul jumped up and, waving his arms, talked to Zhílin, thinking, as before, that he would understand. The interpreter translated: "How much will you give?"

Zhílin considered, and said, "Five hundred roubles." At this the Tartars began speaking very quickly, all together. Abdul began to shout at the red-bearded one, and jabbered so fast that the spittle spurted out of his mouth. The red-bearded one only screwed up his eyes and clicked his tongue.

They quieted down after a while, and the interpreter said, "Five hundred roubles is not enough for the master. He paid two hundred for you himself. Kazi-Mohammed was in debt to him, and he took you in payment. Three thousand roubles! Less than that won't do. If you refuse to write, you will be put into a pit and flogged with a whip!"

"Eh!" thought Zhílin, "the more one fears them the worse it will be."

So he sprang to his feet, and said, "You tell that dog that if he tries to frighten me I will not write at all, and he will get nothing. I never was afraid of you dogs, and never will be!"

The interpreter translated, and again they all began to talk at once.

They jabbered for a long time, and then the dark man jumped up, came to Zhílin, and said: "*Dzhigit Russ, dzhigit Russ!*" (*Dzhigit* in their language means "brave.") And he laughed, and said something to the interpreter, who translated: "One thousand roubles will satisfy him."

Zhílin stuck to it: "I will not give more than five hundred. And if you kill me you'll get nothing at all."

The Tartars talked awhile, then sent the servant out to fetch something, and kept looking, now at Zhílin, now at the door. The servant returned, followed by a stout, barefooted, tattered man, who also had his leg shackled.

Zhílin gasped with surprise: it was Kostílin. He, too, had been taken. They were put side by side, and began to tell each other what had occurred. While they talked the Tartars looked on in silence. Zhílin related what had happened to him; and Kostílin told how his

horse had stopped, his gun missed fire, and this same Abdul had overtaken and captured him.

Abdul jumped up, pointed to Kostílin, and said something. The interpreter translated that they both now belonged to one master, and the one who first paid the ransom would be set free first.

"There now," he said to Zhílin, "you get angry, but your comrade here is gentle; he has written home, and they will send five thousand roubles. So he will be well fed and well treated."

Zhílin replied: "My comrade can do as he likes; maybe he is rich, I am not. It must be as I said. Kill me, if you like—you will gain nothing by it; but I will not write for more than five hundred roubles."

They were silent. Suddenly up sprang Abdul, brought a little box, took out a pen, ink, and a bit of paper, gave them to Zhílin, slapped him on the shoulder, and made a sign that he should write. He had agreed to take five hundred roubles.

"Wait a bit!" said Zhílin to the interpreter; "tell him that he must feed us properly, give us proper clothes and boots, and let us be together. It will be more cheerful for us. And he must have these shackles taken off our feet," and Zhílin looked at his master and laughed.

The master also laughed, heard the interpreter, and said: "I will give them the best of clothes: a cloak and boots fit to be married in. I will feed them like princes; and if they like they can live together in the barn. But I can't take off the shackles, or they will run away. They shall be taken off, however, at night." And he jumped up and slapped Zhílin on the shoulder, exclaiming: "You good, I good!"

Zhílin wrote the letter, but addressed it wrongly, so that it should not reach its destination, thinking to himself: "I'll run away!"

Zhílin and Kostílin were taken back to the barn and given some maize straw, a jug of water, some bread, two old cloaks, and some worn-out military boots—evidently taken from the corpses of Russian soldiers. At night their shackles were taken off their feet, and they were locked up in the barn.

III

Zhilin and his friend lived in this way for a whole month. The master always laughed and said: "You, Iván, good! I, Abdul, good!" But he fed them badly, giving them nothing but unleavened bread of

millet-flour baked into flat cakes, or sometimes only unbaked dough.

Kostílin wrote home a second time, and did nothing but mope and wait for the money to arrive. He would sit for days together in the barn sleeping, or counting the days till a letter could come.

Zhílin knew his letter would reach no one, and he did not write another. He thought: "Where could my mother get enough money to ransom me? As it is, she lived chiefly on what I sent her. If she had to raise five hundred roubles, she would be quite ruined. With God's help, I'll manage to escape!"

So he kept on the look-out planning how to run away.

He would walk about the aoul whistling; or would sit working, modeling dolls of clay, or weaving baskets out of twigs, for Zhílin was clever with his hands.

Once he modeled a doll with a nose and hands and feet and with a Tartar gown on, and put it up on the roof. When the Tartar women came out to fetch water, the master's daughter, Dina, saw the doll and called the women, who put down their jugs and stood looking and laughing. Zhílin took down the doll and held it out to them. They laughed, but dared not take it. He put down the doll and went into the barn, waiting to see what would happen.

Dina ran up to the doll, looked round, seized it, and ran away.

In the morning, at daybreak, he looked out. Dina came out of the house and sat down on the threshold with the doll, which she had dressed up in bits of red stuff, and she rocked it like a baby, singing a Tartar lullaby. An old woman came out and scolded her, and, snatching the doll away she broke it to bits, and sent Dina about her business.

But Zhílin made another doll, better than the first, and gave it to Dina. Once Dina brought a little jug, put it on the ground, sat down gazing at him, and laughed, pointing to the jug.

"What pleases her so?" wondered Zhílin. He took the jug, thinking it was water, but it turned out to be milk. He drank the milk and said: "That's good!"

How pleased Dina was! "Good, Iván, good!" said she, and she jumped up and clapped her hands. Then, seizing the jug, she ran away. After that, she stealthily brought him some milk every day.

The Tartars make a kind of cheese out of goat's milk, which they dry on the roofs of their houses; and sometimes, on the sly, she brought

him some of this cheese. And once, when Abdul had killed a sheep, she brought Zhílin a bit of mutton in her sleeve. She would just throw the things down and run away.

One day there was a heavy storm, and the rain fell in torrents for a whole hour. All the streams became turbid. At the ford, the water rose till it was seven feet high, and the current was so strong that it rolled the stones about. Rivulets flowed everywhere, and the rumbling in the hills never ceased. When the storm was over, the water ran in streams down the village street. Zhílin got his master to lend him a knife, and with it he shaped a small cylinder, and cutting some little boards, he made a wheel to which he fixed two dolls, one on each side. The little girls brought him some bits of stuff, and he dressed the dolls, one as a peasant, the other as a peasant woman. Then he fastened them in their places, and set the wheel so that the stream should work it. The wheel began to turn and the dolls danced.

The whole village collected round. Little boys and girls, Tartar men and woman, all came and clicked their tongues.

"Ah, Russ! Ah, Iván!"

Abdul had a Russian clock, which was broken. He called Zhílin and showed it to him, clicking his tongue.

"Give it me; I'll mend it for you," said Zhílin.

He took it to pieces with the knife, sorted the pieces, and put them together again, so that the clock went all right.

The master was delighted, and made him a present of one of his old tunics which was all in holes. Zhílin had to accept it. He could, at any rate, use it as a coverlet at night.

After that Zhílin's fame spread; and Tartars came from distant villages, bringing him now the lock of a gun, or of a pistol, now a watch, to mend. His master gave him some tools—pincers, gimlets, and a file.

One day a Tartar fell ill, and they came to Zhílin, saying, "Come and heal him!" Zhílin knew nothing about doctoring, but he went to look, and thought to himself, "Perhaps he will get well anyway."

He returned to the barn, mixed some water with sand, and then in the presence of the Tartars whispered some words over it and gave it to the sick man to drink. Luckily for him, the Tartar recovered.

Zhílin began to pick up their language a little, and some of the Tartars grew familiar with him. When they wanted him, they would call:

"Iván! Iván!" Others, however, still looked at him askance, as at a wild beast.

The red-bearded Tartar disliked Zhílin. Whenever he saw him he frowned and turned away, or swore at him. There was also an old man there who did not live in the aoul, but used to come up from the foot of the hill. Zhílin only saw him when he passed on his way to the Mosque. He was short, and had a white cloth wound round his hat. His beard and moustaches were clipped, and white as snow; and his face was wrinkled and brick-red. His nose was hooked like a hawk's, his gray eyes looked cruel, and he had no teeth except two tusks. He would pass, with his turban on his head, leaning on his staff, and glaring round him like a wolf. If he saw Zhílin he would snort with anger and turn away.

Once Zhílin descended the hill to see where the old man lived. He went down along the pathway and came to a little garden surrounded by a stone wall; and behind the wall he saw cherry and apricot trees, and a hut with a flat roof. He came closer, and saw hives made of plaited straw, and bees flying about and humming. The old man was kneeling, busy doing something with a hive. Zhílin stretched to look, and his shackles rattled. The old man turned round, and, giving a yell, snatched a pistol from his belt and shot at Zhílin, who just managed to shelter himself behind the stone wall.

The old man went to Zhílin's master to complain. The master called Zhílin, and said with a laugh, "Why did you go to the old man's house?"

"I did him no harm," replied Zhílin. "I only wanted to see how he lived."

The master repeated what Zhílin said.

But the old man was in a rage; he hissed and jabbered, showing his tusks, and shaking his fists at Zhílin.

Zhílin could not understand all, but he gathered that the old man was telling Abdul he ought not to keep Russians in the aoul, but ought to kill them. At last the old man went away.

Zhílin asked the master who the old man was.

"He is a great man!" said the master. "He was the bravest of our fellows; he killed many Russians, and was at one time very rich. He had three wives and eight sons, and they all lived in one village. Then the Russians came and destroyed the village, and killed seven

of his sons. Only one son was left, and he gave himself up to the Russians. The old man also went and gave himself up, and lived among the Russians for three months. At the end of that time he found his son, killed him with his own hands, and then escaped. After that he left off fighting, and went to Mecca to pray to God; that is why he wears a turban. One who has been to Mecca is called 'Hadji,' and wears a turban. He does not like you fellows. He tells me to kill you. But I can't kill you. I have paid money for you and, besides, I have grown fond of you, Iván. Far from killing you, I would not even let you go if I had not promised." And he laughed, saying in Russian, "You, Iván, good; I, Abdul, good!"

IV

Zhilin lived in this way for a month. During the day he sauntered about the aoul or busied himself with some handicraft, but at night, when all was silent in the aoul, he dug at the floor of the barn. It was no easy task digging, because of the stones; but he worked away at them with his file, and at last had made a hole under the wall large enough to get through.

"If only I could get to know the lay of the land," thought he, "and which way to go! But none of the Tartars will tell me."

So he chose a day when the master was away from home, and set off after dinner to climb the hill beyond the village, and to look around. But before leaving home the master always gave orders to his son to watch Zhílin, and not to lose sight of him. So the lad ran after Zhílin, shouting: "Don't go! Father does not allow it. I'll call the neighbours if you won't come back."

Zhílin tried to persuade him, and said: "I'm not going far; I only want to climb that hill. I want to find a herb—to cure sick people with. You come with me if you like. How can I run away with these shackles on? Tomorrow I'll make a bow and arrows for you."

So he persuaded the lad, and they went. To look at the hill, it did not seem far to the top; but it was hard walking with shackles on his leg. Zhílin went on and on, but it was all he could do to reach the top. There he sat down and noted how the land lay. To the south, beyond the barn, was a valley in which a herd of horses was pasturing, and at the bottom of the valley one could see another aoul. Beyond

that was a still steeper hill, and another hill beyond that. Between the hills, in the blue distance, were forests, and still further off were mountains, rising higher and higher. The highest of them were covered with snow, white as sugar; and one snowy peak towered above all the rest. To the east and to the west were other such hills, and here and there smoke rose from aouls in the ravines. "Ah," thought he, "all that is Tartar country." And he turned towards the Russian side. At his feet he saw a river, and the aoul he lived in, surrounded by little gardens. He could see women, like tiny dolls, sitting by the river rinsing clothes. Beyond the aoul was a hill, lower than the one to the south, and beyond it two other hills well wooded; and between these, a smooth bluish plain, and far, far across the plain something that looked like a cloud of smoke. Zhílin tried to remember where the sun used to rise and set when he was living in the fort, and he saw that there was no mistake: the Russian fort must be in that plain. Between those two hills he would have to make his way when he escaped.

The sun was beginning to set. The white, snowy mountains turned red, and the dark hills turned darker; mists rose from the ravine, and the valley, where he supposed the Russian fort to be, seemed on fire with the sunset glow. Zhílin looked carefully. Something seemed to be quivering in the valley like smoke from a chimney, and he felt sure the Russian fortress was there.

It had grown late. The Mullah's cry was heard. The herds were being driven home, the cows were lowing, and the lad kept saying, "Come home!" But Zhílin did not feel inclined to go away.

At last, however, they went back. "Well," thought Zhílin, "now that I know the way, it is time to escape." He thought of running away that night. The nights were dark—the moon had waned. But as ill-luck would have it, the Tartars returned home that evening. They generally came back driving cattle before them and in good spirits. But this time they had no cattle. All they brought home was the dead body of a Tartar—the red one's brother—who had been killed. They came back looking sullen, and they all gathered together for the burial. Zhílin also came out to see it.

They wrapped the body in a piece of linen, without any coffin, and carried it out of the village, and laid it on the grass under some plane-trees. The Mullah and the old men came. They wound clothes round

their caps, took off their shoes, and squatted on their heels, side by side, near the corpse.

The Mullah was in front: behind him in a row were three old men in turbans, and behind them again the other Tartars. All cast down their eyes and sat in silence. This continued a long time, until the Mullah raised his head and said: "Allah!" (which means God). He said that one word, and they all cast down their eyes again, and were again silent for a long time. They sat quite still, not moving or making any sound.

Again the Mullah lifted his head and said, "Allah!" and they all repeated: "Allah! Allah!" and were again silent.

The dead body lay immovable on the grass, and they sat as still as if they too were dead. Not one of them moved. There was no sound but that of the leaves of the plane-trees stirring in the breeze. Then the Mullah repeated a prayer, and they all rose. They lifted the body and carried it in their arms to a hole in the ground. It was not an ordinary hole, but was hollowed out under the ground like a vault. They took the body under the arms and by the legs, bent it, and let it gently down, pushing it under the earth in a sitting posture, with the hands folded in front.

The Nogáy brought some green rushes, which they stuffed into the hole, and quickly covering it with earth, they smoothed the ground, and set an upright stone at the head of the grave. Then they trod the earth down, and again sat in a row before the grave, keeping silence for a long time.

At last they rose, said "Allah! Allah! Allah!" and sighed.

The red-bearded Tartar gave money to the old men; then he too rose, took a whip, struck himself with it three times on the forehead, and went home.

The next morning Zhílin saw the red Tartar, followed by three others, leading a mare out of the village. When they were beyond the village, the red-bearded Tartar took off his tunic and turned up his sleeves, showing his stout arms. Then he drew a dagger and sharpened it on a whetstone. The other Tartars raised the mare's head, and he cut her throat, threw her down, and began skinning her, loosening the hide with his big hands. Women and girls came and began to wash the entrails and the inwards. The mare was cut up, the pieces taken

into the hut, and the whole village collected at the red Tartar's hut for a funeral feast.

For three days they went on eating the flesh of the mare, drinking *buza*, and praying for the dead man. All the Tartars were at home. On the fourth day at dinner-time Zhílin saw them preparing to go away. Horses were brought out, they got ready, and some ten of them (the red one among them) rode away; but Abdul stayed at home. It was new moon, and the nights were still dark.

"Ah!" thought Zhílin, "tonight is the time to escape." And he told Kostílin; but Kostílin's heart failed him.

"How can we escape?" he said. "We don't even know the way."

"I know the way," said Zhílin.

"Even if you do," said Kostílin, "we can't reach the fort in one night."

"If we can't," said Zhílin, "we'll sleep in the forest. See here, I have saved some cheeses. What's the good of sitting and moping here? If they send your ransom—well and good; but suppose they don't manage to collect it? The Tartars are angry now, because the Russians have killed one of their men. They are talking of killing us."

Kostílin thought it over.

"Well, let's go," said he.

V

ZHÍLIN crept into the hole, widened it so that Kostílin might also get through, and then they both sat waiting till all should be quiet in the aoul.

As soon as all was quiet, Zhílin crept under the wall, got out, and whispered to Kostílin, "Come!" Kostílin crept out, but in so doing he caught a stone with his foot and made a noise. The master had a very vicious watch-dog, a spotted one called Oulyashin. Zhílin had been careful to feed him for some time before. Oulyashin heard the noise and began to bark and jump, and the other dogs did the same. Zhílin gave a slight whistle, and threw him a bit of cheese. Oulyashin knew Zhílin, wagged his tail, and stopped barking.

But the master had heard the dog, and shouted to him from his hut, "Hayt, hayt, Oulyashin!"

Zhílin, however, scratched Oulyashin behind the ears, and the dog was quiet, and rubbed against his legs, wagging his tail.

They sat hidden behind a corner for awhile. All became silent again, only a sheep coughed inside a shed, and the water rippled over the stones in the hollow. It was dark, the stars were high overhead, and the new moon showed red as it set, horns upward, behind the hill. In the valleys the fog was white as milk.

Zhílin rose and said to his companion, "Well, friend, come along!"

They started; but they had only gone a few steps when they heard the Mullah crying from the roof, "Allah, Beshmillah! Ilrahman!" That meant that the people would be going to the mosque. So they sat down again, hiding behind a wall, and waited a long time till the people had passed. At last all was quiet again.

"Now then! May God be with us!" They crossed themselves, and started once more. They passed through a yard and went down the hillside to the river, crossed the river, and went along the valley.

The mist was thick, but only near the ground; overhead the stars shone quite brightly. Zhílin directed their course by the stars. It was cool in the mist, and easy walking; only their boots were uncomfortable, being worn out and trodden down. Zhílin took his off, threw them away, and went barefoot, jumping from stone to stone, and guiding his course by the stars. Kostílin began to lag behind.

"Walk slower," he said, "these confounded boots have quite blistered my feet."

"Take them off!" said Zhílin. "It will be easier walking without them."

Kostílin went barefoot, but got on still worse. The stones cut his feet, and he kept lagging behind. Zhílin said: "If your feet get cut, they'll heal again; but if the Tartars catch us and kill us, it will be worse!"

Kostílin did not reply, but went on, groaning all the time.

Their way lay through the valley for a long time. Then, to the right, they heard dogs barking. Zhílin stopped, looking about, and began climbing the hill, feeling with his hands.

"Ah!" said he, "we have gone wrong, have come too far to the right. Here is another aoul, one I saw from the hill. We must turn back and go up that hill to the left. There must be a wood there."

But Kostílin said: "Wait a minute! Let me get breath. My feet are all cut and bleeding."

"Never mind, friend! They'll heal again. You should spring more lightly. Like this!"

And Zhílin ran back and turned to the left up the hill towards the wood.

Kostílin still lagged behind, and groaned. Zhílin only said "Hush!" and went on and on.

They went up the hill and found a wood as Zhílin had said. They entered the wood and forced their way through the brambles, which tore their clothes. At last they came to a path and followed it.

"Stop!" They heard the tramp of hoofs on the path, and waited, listening. It sounded like the tramping of a horse's feet, but then ceased. They moved on, and again they heard the tramping. When they paused, it also stopped. Zhílin crept nearer to it, and saw something standing on the path where it was not quite so dark. It looked like a horse, and yet not quite like one, and on it was something queer, not like a man. He heard it snorting. "What can it be?" Zhílin gave a low whistle, and off it dashed from the path into the thicket, and the woods were filled with the noise of crackling, as if a hurricane were sweeping through, breaking the branches.

Kostílin was so frightened that he sank to the ground. But Zhílin laughed and said: "It's a stag. Don't you hear him breaking the branches with his antlers? We were afraid of him, and he is afraid of us."

They went on. The Great Bear was already setting. It was near morning, and they did not know whether they were going the right way or not. Zhílin thought it was the way he had been brought by the Tartars, and that they were still some seven miles from the Russian fort; but he had nothing certain to go by, and at night one easily mistakes the way. After a time they came to a clearing. Kostílin sat down and said: "Do as you like, I can go no farther! My feet won't carry me."

Zhílin tried to persuade him.

"No, I shall never get there; I can't!"

Zhílin grew angry, and spoke roughly to him.

"Well, then, I shall go on alone. Good-bye!"

Kostílin jumped up and followed. They went another three miles.

The mist in the wood had settled down still more densely; they could not see a yard before them, and the stars had grown dim.

Suddenly they heard the sound of a horse's hoofs in front of them. They heard its shoes strike the stone. Zhílin lay down flat, and listened with his ear to the ground.

"Yes, so it is! A horseman is coming towards us."

They ran off the path, crouched among the bushes, and waited. Zhílin crept to the road, looked, and saw a Tartar on horseback driving a cow and humming to himself. The Tartar rode past. Zhílin returned to Kostílin.

"God has led him past us; get up and let's go on!"

Kostílin tried to rise, but fell back again.

"I can't; on my word I can't! I have no strength left."

He was heavy and stout, and had been perspiring freely. Chilled by the mist, and with his feet all bleeding, he had grown quite limp.

Zhílin tried to lift him, when suddenly Kostílin screamed out: "Oh, how it hurts!"

Zhílin's heart sank.

"What are you shouting for? The Tartar is still near; he'll have heard you!" And he thought to himself, "He is really quite done up. What am I to do with him? It won't do to desert a comrade."

"Well, then, get up, and climb up on my back. I'll carry you if you really can't walk."

He helped Kostílin up, and put his arms under his thighs. Then he went out on to the path, carrying him.

"Only, for the love of heaven," said Zhílin, "don't throttle me with your hands! Hold on to my shoulders."

Zhílin found his load heavy; his feet, too, were bleeding, and he was tired out. Now and then he stooped to balance Kostílin better, jerking him up so that he should sit higher, and then went on again.

The Tartar must, however, really have heard Kostílin scream. Zhílin suddenly heard some one galloping behind and shouting in the Tartar tongue. He darted in among the bushes. The Tartar seized his gun and fired, but did not hit them, shouted in his own language, and galloped off along the road.

"Well, now we are lost, friend!" said Zhílin. "That dog will gather the Tartars together to hunt us down. Unless we can get a couple of miles away from here we are lost!" And he thought to himself, "Why

the devil did I saddle myself with this block? I should have got away long ago had I been alone."

"Go on alone," said Kostílin. "Why should you perish because of me?"

"No, I won't go. It won't do to desert a comrade."

Again he took Kostílin on his shoulders and staggered on. They went on in that way for another half-mile or more. They were still in the forest, and could not see the end of it. But the mist was already dispersing, and clouds seemed to be gathering; the stars were no longer to be seen. Zhílin was quite done up. They came to a spring walled in with stones by the side of the path. Zhílin stopped and set Kostílin down.

"Let me have a rest and a drink," said he, "and let us eat some of the cheese. It can't be much farther now."

But hardly had he lain down to get a drink, when he heard the sound of horses' feet behind him. Again they darted to the right among the bushes, and lay down under a steep slope.

They heard Tartar voices. The Tartars stopped at the very spot where they had turned off the path. The Tartars talked a bit, and then seemed to be setting a dog on the scent. There was a sound of crackling twigs, and a strange dog appeared from behind the bushes. It stopped, and began to bark.

Then the Tartars, also strangers, came climbing down, seized Zhílin and Kostílin, bound them, put them on horses, and rode away with them.

When they had ridden about two miles, they met Abdul, their owner, with two other Tartars following him. After talking with the strangers, he put Zhílin and Kostílin on two of his own horses and took them back to the aoul.

Abdul did not laugh now, and did not say a word to them.

They were back at the aoul by daybreak, and were set down in the street. The children came crowding round, throwing stones, shrieking, and beating them with whips.

The Tartars gathered together in a circle, and the old man from the foot of the hill was also there. They began discussing; and Zhílin heard them considering what should be done with him and Kostílin. Some said they ought to be sent farther into the mountains; but the old man said: "They must be killed!"

Abdul disputed with him, saying: "I gave money for them, and I must get ransom for them." But the old man said: "They will pay you nothing, but will only bring misfortune. It is a sin to feed Russians. Kill them, and have done with it!"

They dispersed. When they had gone, the master came up to Zhílin and said: "If the money for your ransom is not sent within a fortnight, I will flog you; and if you try to run away again, I'll kill you like a dog! Write a letter, and write properly!"

Paper was brought to them, and they wrote the letters. Shackles were put on their feet, and they were taken behind the Mosque to a deep pit about twelve feet square, into which they were let down.

VI

Life was now very hard for them. Their shackles were never taken off, and they were not let out into the fresh air. Unbaked dough was thrown to them as if they were dogs, and water was let down in a can.

It was wet and close in the pit, and there was a horrible stench. Kostílin grew quite ill, his body became swollen and he ached all over, and moaned or slept all the time. Zhílin, too, grew downcast; he saw it was a bad look-out, and could think of no way of escape.

He tried to make a tunnel, but there was nowhere to put the earth. His master noticed it, and threatened to kill him.

He was sitting on the floor of the pit one day, thinking of freedom and feeling very downhearted, when suddenly a cake fell into his lap, then another, and then a shower of cherries. He looked up, and there was Dina. She looked at him, laughed, and ran away. And Zhílin thought: "Might not Dina help me?"

He cleared out a little place in the pit, scraped up some clay, and began modelling toys. He made men, horses, and dogs, thinking, "When Dina comes I'll throw them up to her."

But Dina did not come next day. Zhílin heard the tramp of horses; some men rode past, and the Tartars gathered in council near the Mosque. They shouted and argued; the word "Russians" was repeated several times. He could hear the voice of the old man. Though he could not distinguish what was said, he guessed that Russian troops were somewhere near, and that the Tartars, afraid they might come into the aoul, did not know what to do with their prisoners.

After talking awhile, they went away. Suddenly he heard a rustling overhead, and saw Dina crouching at the edge of the pit, her knees higher than her head, and bending over so that the coins of her plait dangled above the pit. Her eyes gleamed like stars. She drew two cheeses out of her sleeve and threw them to him. Zhílin took them and said, "Why did you not come before? I have made some toys for you. Here, catch!" And he began throwing the toys up, one by one.

But she shook her head and would not look at them.

"I don't want any," she said. She sat silent for awhile, and then went on, "Iván, they want to kill you!" And she pointed to her own throat.

"Who wants to kill me?"

"Father; the old men say he must. But I am sorry for you!"

Zhílin answered: "Well, if you are sorry for me, bring me a long pole."

She shook her head, as much as to say, "I can't!"

He clasped his hands and prayed her: "Dina, please do! Dear Dina, I beg of you!"

"I can't!" she said, "they would see me bringing it. They're all at home." And she went away.

So when evening came Zhílin still sat looking up now and then, and wondering what would happen. The stars were there, but the moon had not yet risen. The Mullah's voice was heard; then all was silent. Zhílin was beginning to doze, thinking: "The girl will be afraid to do it!"

Suddenly he felt clay falling on his head. He looked up, and saw a long pole poking into the opposite wall of the pit. It kept poking about for a time, and then it came down, sliding into the pit. Zhílin was glad indeed. He took hold of it and lowered it. It was a strong pole, one that he had seen before on the roof of his master's hut.

He looked up. The stars were shining high in the sky, and, just above the pit, Dina's eyes gleamed in the dark like a cat's. She stooped with her face close to the edge of the pit, and whispered, "Iván! Iván!" waving her hand in front of her face to show that he should speak low.

"What?" said Zhílin.

"All but two have gone away."

Then Zhílin said, "Well, Kostílin, come; let us have one last try; I'll help you up."

But Kostílin would not hear of it.

"No," said he, "it's clear I can't get away from here. How can I go, when I have hardly strength to turn round?"

"Well, good-bye, then! Don't think ill of me!" and they kissed each other. Zhílin seized the pole, told Dina to hold on, and began to climb. He slipped once or twice; the shackles hindered him. Kostílin helped him, and he managed to get to the top. Dina, with her little hands, pulled with all her might at his shirt, laughing.

Zhílin drew out the pole, and said, "Put it back in its place, Dina, or they'll notice, and you will be beaten."

She dragged the pole away, and Zhílin went down the hill. When he had gone down the steep incline, he took a sharp stone and tried to wrench the lock off the shackles. But it was a strong lock and he could not manage to break it, and besides, it was difficult to get at. Then he heard some one running down the hill, springing lightly. He thought: "Surely, that's Dina again."

Dina came, took a stone, and said, "Let me try."

She knelt down and tried to wrench the lock off, but her little hands were as slender as little twigs, and she had not the strength. She threw the stone away and began to cry. Then Zhílin set to work again at the lock, and Dina squatted beside him with her hand on his shoulder.

Zhílin looked round and saw a red light to the left behind the hill. The moon was just rising. "Ah!" he thought, "before the moon has risen I must have passed the valley and be in the forest." So he rose and threw away the stone. Shackles or no, he must go on.

"Good-bye, Dina dear!" he said. "I shall never forget you!"

Dina seized hold of him and felt about with her hands for a place to put some cheeses she had brought. He took them from her.

"Thank you, my little one. Who will make dolls for you when I am gone?" And he stroked her head.

Dina burst into tears, hiding her face in her hands. Then she ran up the hill like a young goat, the coins in her plait clinking against her back.

Zhílin crossed himself, took the lock of his shackles in his hand to prevent its clattering, and went along the road, dragging his shack-

led leg, and looking towards the place where the moon was about to rise. He now knew the way. If he went straight he would have to walk nearly six miles. If only he could reach the wood before the moon had quite risen! He crossed the river; the light behind the hill was growing whiter. Still looking at it, he went along the valley. The moon was not yet visible. The light became brighter, and one side of the valley was growing lighter and lighter, and shadows were drawing in towards the foot of the hill, creeping nearer and nearer to him.

Zhílin went on, keeping in the shade. He was hurrying, but the moon was moving still faster; the tops of the hills on the right were already lit up. As he got near the wood the white moon appeared from behind the hills, and it became light as day. One could see all the leaves on the trees. It was light on the hills, but silent, as if nothing were alive; no sound could be heard but the gurgling of the river below.

Zhílin reached the wood without meeting any one, chose a dark spot, and sat down to rest.

He rested, and ate one of the cheeses. Then he found a stone and set to work again to knock off the shackles. He knocked his hands sore, but could not break the lock. He rose and went along the road. After walking the greater part of a mile he was quite done up, and his feet were aching. He had to stop every ten steps. "There is nothing else for it," thought he. "I must drag on as long as I have any strength left. If I sit down, I shan't be able to rise again. I can't reach the fortress; but when day breaks I'll lie down in the forest, remain there all day, and go on again at night."

He went on all night. Two Tartars on horseback passed him; but he heard them a long way off, and hid behind a tree.

The moon began to grow paler, the dew to fall. It was getting near dawn, and Zhílin had not reached the end of the forest. "Well," thought he, "I'll walk another thirty steps, and then turn in among the trees and sit down."

He walked another thirty steps, and saw that he was at the end of the forest. He went to the edge; it was now quite light, and straight before him was the plain and the fortress. To the left, quite close at the foot of the slope, a fire was dying out, and the smoke from it spread round. There were men gathered about the fire.

He looked intently, and saw guns glistening. They were soldiers—Cossacks!

Zhílin was filled with joy. He collected his remaining strength and set off down the hill, saying to himself: "God forbid that any mounted Tartar should see me now, in the open field! Near as I am, I could not get there in time."

Hardly had he said this when, a couple of hundred yards off, on a hillock to the left, he saw three Tartars.

They saw him also and made a rush. His heart sank. He waved his hands, and shouted with all his might, "Brothers, brothers! Help!"

The Cossacks heard him, and a party of them on horseback darted to cut across the Tartars' path. The Cossacks were far and the Tartars were near; but Zhílin, too, made a last effort. Lifting the shackles with his hand, he ran towards the Cossacks, hardly knowing what he was doing, crossing himself and shouting, "Brothers! Brothers! Brothers!"

There were some fifteen Cossacks. The Tartars were frightened, and stopped before reaching him. Zhílin staggered up to the Cossacks.

They surrounded him and began questioning him. "Who are you? What are you? Where from?"

But Zhílin was quite beside himself, and could only weep and repeat, "Brothers! Brothers!"

Then the soldiers came running up and crowded round Zhílin—one giving him bread, another buckwheat, a third vódka: one wrapping a cloak round him, another breaking his shackles.

The officers recognized him, and rode with him to the fortress. The soldiers were glad to see him back, and his comrades all gathered round him.

Zhílin told them all that had happened to him.

"That's the way I went home and got married!" said he. "No. It seems plain that fate was against it!"

So he went on serving in the Caucasus. A month passed before Kostílin was released, after paying five thousand roubles ransom. He was almost dead when they brought him back.

The Death of Olivier Bécaille

BY ÉMILE ZOLA

(*1840-1902*)

I

It was on a Saturday, at six in the morning, that I died, after a three days' illness. My wife was searching a trunk for some linen, and when she rose and turned she saw me rigid, with open eyes and silent pulses. She ran to me, fancying I had fainted, touched my hands, and bent over me. Then she suddenly grew alarmed, burst into tears, and stammered:

"My God! my God! he is dead!"

I heard everything, but the sounds seem to come from a great distance. My left eye still detected a faint glimmer, a whitish light in which all objects melted, but my right eye was quite bereft of sight. It was the coma of my whole being, as if a thunderbolt had struck me. My will was annihilated, not a fibre of my flesh obeyed my bidding. And yet amid the impotency of my inert limbs my thoughts subsisted, sluggish and lazy, still perfectly clear.

My poor Marguerite was crying; she had dropped on her knees beside the bed, repeating in heartrending tones:

"He is dead! my God! he is dead!"

Was this strange state of torpor, this immobility of the flesh, really death, although the functions of the intellect were not arrested? Was my soul only lingering for a brief space before it soared away for ever? From my childhood upwards I had been subject to hysterical attacks, and twice, in early youth, I had nearly succumbed to nervous fevers. By degrees all those who surrounded me had got accustomed to consider me an invalid, and to see me sickly. So much so, that I myself had forbidden my wife to call in a doctor when I had taken to my bed on the day of our arrival at the cheap lodging-house of the Rue Dauphine

in Paris. A little rest would soon set me right again; it was only the fatigue of the journey which had caused my intolerable weariness. And yet I was conscious of having felt singularly uneasy. We had left our province somewhat abruptly; we were very poor, and had barely enough money to support ourselves till I drew my first month's salary in the office where I had obtained a situation. And now a sudden seizure was carrying me off!

Was it really death? I had pictured to myself a darker night, a deeper silence. As a little child I had already felt afraid to die. Being weak and compassionately petted by everyone, I had concluded that I had not long to live, that I should soon be buried; and the thought of the cold earth filled me with a dread I could not master—a dread which haunted me day and night. As I grew older the same terror pursued me. Sometimes, after long hours spent in reasoning with myself, I thought that I had conquered my fear. I reflected, "After all, what does it matter? one dies and all is over. It is the common fate; nothing could be better or easier."

I then prided myself on being able to look death boldly in the face; but suddenly a shiver froze my blood, and my dizzy anguish returned as if a giant hand had swung me over a dark abyss. It was some vision of the earth returning and setting reason at naught. How often at night did I start up in bed, not knowing what cold breath had swept over my slumbers, but clasping my despairing hands and moaning, "Must I die?" In those moments an icy horror would stop my pulses, while an appalling vision of dissolution rose before me. It was with difficulty that I could get to sleep again. Indeed, sleep alarmed me, it so closely resembled death. If I closed my eyes they might never open again—I might slumber on for ever.

I cannot tell if others have endured the same torture; I only know that my own life was made a torment by it. Death ever rose between me and all I loved; I can remember how the thought of it poisoned the happiest moments I spent with Marguerite. During the first months of our married life, when she lay sleeping by my side and I dreamed of a fair future for her and with her, the foreboding of some fatal separation dashed my hopes aside and embittered my delights. Perhaps we should be parted on the morrow—nay, perhaps in an hour's time. Then utter discouragement assailed me; I wondered what the bliss of being united availed me if it were to end in so cruel a disruption.

My morbid imagination revelled in scenes of mourning. I speculated as to who would be the first to depart, Marguerite or I. Either alternative caused me harrowing grief, and tears rose to my eyes at the thought of our shattered lives. At the happiest periods of my existence I often became a prey to grim dejection such as nobody could understand, but which was caused by the thought of impending nihility. When I was most successful I was to general wonder most depressed. The fatal question, "What avails it?" rang like a knell in my ears. But the sharpest sting of this torment was that it came with a secret sense of shame, which rendered me unable to confide my thoughts to another. Husband and wife lying side by side in the darkened room may quiver with the same shudder and yet remain mute; for people do not mention death any more than they pronounce certain obscene words. Fear makes it nameless.

I was musing thus while my dear Marguerite knelt sobbing at my feet. It grieved me sorely to be unable to comfort her by telling her that I suffered no pain. If death were merely the annihilation of the flesh it had been foolish of me to harbour so much dread. I experienced a selfish kind of restfulness in which all my cares were forgotten. My memory had become extraordinarily vivid. My whole life passed before me rapidly like a play in which I no longer acted a part; it was a curious and enjoyable sensation—I seemed to hear a far-off voice relating my own history.

I saw in particular a certain spot in the country near Guérande, on the way to Piriac. The road turns sharply, and some scattered pine-trees carelessly dot a rocky slope. When I was seven years old I used to pass through those pines with my father as far as a crumbling old house, where Marguerite's parents gave me pancakes. They were salt-gatherers, and earned a scanty livelihood by working the adjacent salt marshes. Then I remembered the school at Nantes, where I had grown up, leading a monotonous life within its ancient walls and yearning for the broad horizon of Guérande, and the salt marshes stretching to the limitless sea widening under the sky.

Next came a blank—my father was dead. I entered the hospital as clerk to the managing board and led a dreary life with one solitary diversion: my Sunday visits to the old house on the Piriac road. The salt works were doing badly; poverty reigned in the land, and Marguerite's parents were nearly penniless. Marguerite, when merely a

child, had been fond of me because I trundled her about in a wheelbarrow, but on the morning when I asked her in marriage she shrank from me with a frightened gesture, and I realised that she thought me hideous. Her parents, however, consented at once; they looked upon my offer as a godsend, and the daughter submissively acquiesced. When she became accustomed to the idea of marrying me she did not seem to dislike it so much. On our wedding day at Guérande the rain fell in torrents, and when we got home my bride had to take off her dress, which was soaked through, and sit in her petticoats.

That was all the youth I ever had. We did not remain long in our province. One day I found my wife in tears. She was miserable, life was so dull, she wanted to get away. Six months later I had saved a little money by taking in extra work after office hours, and through the influence of a friend of my father's I obtained a petty appointment in Paris. I started off to settle there with the dear little woman so that she might cry no more. During the night which we spent in the third-class railway carriage, the seats being very hard, I took her in my arms in order that she might sleep.

That was the past, and now I had just died on the narrow bed of a Paris lodging-house, and my wife was crouching on the floor, and crying bitterly. The white light before my left eye was growing dim, but I remembered the room perfectly. On the left there was a chest of drawers, on the right a mantelpiece surmounted by a damaged clock without a pendulum, the hands of which marked ten minutes past ten. The window overlooked the Rue Dauphine, a long dark street. All Paris seemed to pass below, and the noise was so great that the window shook.

We knew nobody in the city; we had hurried our departure, but I was not expected at the office till the following Monday. Since I had taken to my bed I had wondered at my imprisonment in this narrow room into which we had tumbled after a railway journey of fifteen hours, followed by a hurried, confusing transit through the noisy streets. My wife had nursed me with smiling tenderness, but I knew that she was anxious. She would walk to the window, glance out and return to the bedside, looking very pale and startled by the sight of the busy thoroughfare, the aspect of the vast city of which she did not know a single stone, and which deafened her with its continuous roar. What

would happen to her if I never woke up again—alone, friendless, and unknowing as she was?

Marguerite had caught hold of one of my hands which lay passive on the coverlet, and covering it with kisses she repeated wildly: "Olivier, answer me. Oh, my God, he is dead, dead!"

So death was not complete annihilation. I could hear and think. I had been uselessly alarmed all those years. I had not dropped into utter vacancy as I had anticipated. I could not picture the disappearance of my being, the suppression of all that I had been, without the possibility of renewed existence. I had been wont to shudder whenever in any book or newspaper I came across a date of a hundred years hence. A date at which I should no longer be alive, a future which I should never see, filled me with unspeakable uneasiness. Was I not the whole world, and would not the universe crumble away when I was no more?

To dream of life in death had been a cherished vision, but this could not possibly be death. I should assuredly awake presently. Yes, in a few moments I would lean over, take Marguerite in my arms, and dry her tears. I would rest a little while longer before going to my office; and then a new life would begin, brighter than the last. However, I did not feel impatient; the commotion had been too strong. It was wrong of Marguerite to give way like that when I had not even the strength to turn my head on the pillow and smile at her. The next time that she moaned out "He is dead! dead!" I would embrace her, and murmur softly so as not to startle her: "No, my darling, I was only asleep. You see I am alive, and I love you."

II

Marguerite's cries had attracted attention, for all at once the door was opened, and a voice exclaimed: "What is the matter, neighbour? Is he worse?"

I recognized the voice; it was that of an elderly woman, Madame Gabin, who occupied a room on the same floor. She had been most obliging since our arrival, and had evidently become interested in our concerns. On her own side she had lost no time in telling us her history. A stern landlord had sold her furniture during the previous winter to pay himself his rent, and since then she had resided at the

lodging-house in the Rue Dauphine with her daughter Dédé, a child of ten. They both cut and pinked lamp-shades; and between them they earned at the utmost only two francs a day.

"Heavens! is it all over?" cried Madame Gabin, looking at me.

I realised that she was drawing nearer. She examined me, touched me, and turning to Marguerite murmured compassionately: "Poor girl! poor girl!"

My wife, wearied out, was sobbing like a child. Madame Gabin lifted her, placed her in a dilapidated armchair near the fireplace, and proceeded to comfort her.

"Indeed you'll do yourself harm if you go on like this, my dear. It's no reason because your husband is gone that you should kill yourself with weeping. Sure enough, when I lost Gabin I was just like you. I remained three days without swallowing a morsel of food. But that didn't help me—on the contrary, it pulled me down. Come, for the Lord's sake, be sensible!"

By degrees Marguerite grew calmer; she was exhausted, and it was only at intervals that she gave way to a fresh flow of tears. Meanwhile the old woman had taken possession of the room with a sort of rough authority.

"Don't worry yourself," she said, as she bustled about. "Neighbours must help each other. Luckily Dédé has just gone to take the work home. Ah, I see, your trunks are not yet all unpacked, but I suppose there is some linen in the chest of drawers—isn't there?"

I heard her pull a drawer open; she must have taken out a napkin which she spread on the little table at the bedside. She then struck a match, which made me think that she was lighting one of the candles on the mantelpiece, and placing it near me as a religious rite. I could follow her movements in the room and divine all her actions.

"Poor gentleman," she muttered. "Luckily I heard you sobbing, poor dear!"

Suddenly the vague light which my left eye had detected vanished. Madame Gabin had just closed my eyelids, but I had not felt her finger on my face. When I understood this I felt chilled.

The door had opened again, and Dédé, the child of ten, now rushed in, calling out in her shrill voice: "Mother, mother! Ah, I knew you would be here! Look here, there's the money—three francs and four sous. I took back three dozen lamp-shades."

"Hush, hush! Hold your tongue," vainly repeated the mother, who, as the little girl chattered on, must have pointed to the bed, for I guessed that the child felt perplexed, and was backing towards the door.

"Is the gentleman asleep?" she whispered.

"Yes, yes—go and play," said Madame Gabin.

But the child did not go. She was, no doubt, staring at me with widely opened eyes, startled and vaguely comprehending. Suddenly she seemed convulsed with terror, and ran out, upsetting a chair.

"He is dead, mother, he is dead!" she gasped.

Profound silence followed. Marguerite, lying back in the arm-chair, had left off crying. Madame Gabin was still rummaging about the room, and talking under her breath.

"Children know everything nowadays. Look at that girl. Heaven knows how carefully she's brought up! When I send her on an errand, or to take the shades back, I calculate the time to a minute so that she can't loiter about, but for all that she learns everything. She saw at a glance what had happened here—and yet I never showed her but one corpse, that of her uncle François, and she was then only four years old. Ah, well! there are no children left—it can't be helped."

She paused, and without any transition passed to another subject.

"I say, dearie, we must think of the formalities—there's the declaration at the municipal offices to be made, and the seeing about the funeral. You are not in a fit state to attend to business. What do you say if I look in at Monsieur Simoneau's to find out if he's at home?"

Marguerite did not reply. It seemed to me that I watched her from afar, and at times changed into a subtle flame hovering above the room, while a stranger lay heavy and unconscious on my bed. I wished that Marguerite had declined the assistance of Simoneau. I had seen him three or four times during my brief illness, for he occupied a room close to ours, and had been civil and neighbourly. Madame Gabin had told us that he was merely making a short stay in Paris, having come to collect some old debts due to his father, who had settled in the country and recently died. He was a tall, strong, handsome young man, and I hated him, perhaps on account of his healthy appearance. On the previous evening he had come in to make inquiries, and I had much disliked seeing him at Marguerite's side; she had looked so fair and pretty, and he had gazed so intently into her face when she smilingly thanked him for his kindness.

"Ah! here is Monsieur Simoneau," said Madame Gabin, introducing him.

He gently pushed the door ajar, and as soon as Marguerite saw him enter she burst into a flood of tears. The presence of a friend, of the only person she knew in Paris besides the old woman, recalled her bereavement. I could not see the young man, but in the darkness that encompassed me I conjured up his appearance. I pictured him distinctly, grave and sad at finding poor Marguerite in such distress. How lovely she must have looked with her golden hair unbound, her pale face and her dear little baby hands burning with fever!

"I am at your disposal, madame," he said softly. "Pray allow me to manage everything."

She only answered him with broken words, but as the young man was leaving, accompanied by Madame Gabin, I heard the latter mention money. These things were always expensive, she said, and she feared that the poor little body hadn't a farthing—anyhow, he might ask her. But Simoneau silenced the old woman; he did not want to have the widow worried; he was going to the municipal office and to the undertakers.

When silence reigned once more I wondered if my nightmare would last much longer. I was certainly alive, for I was conscious of passing incidents, and I began to realise my condition. I must have fallen into one of those cataleptic states that I had read of. As a child I had suffered from syncopes which had lasted several hours, but surely my heart would soon beat anew, my blood circulate and my muscles relax. Yes, I should wake up and comfort Marguerite; and, reasoning thus, I tried to be patient.

Time passed. Madame Gabin had brought in some breakfast, but Marguerite refused to taste any food. Later on the afternoon waned. Through the open window I heard the rising clamour of the Rue Dauphine. By-and-by a slight ringing of the brass candlestick on the marble-topped table made me think that a fresh candle had been lighted. At last Simoneau returned.

"Well?" whispered the old woman.

"It is all settled," he answered; "the funeral is ordered for tomorrow at eleven. There is nothing for you to do, and you needn't talk of these things before the poor lady."

Nevertheless Madame Gabin remarked: "The doctor of the dead hasn't come yet."

Simoneau took a seat beside Marguerite, and after a few words of encouragement remained silent. The funeral was to take place at eleven! Those words rang in my brain like a passing bell. And the doctor was coming—the doctor of the dead, as Madame Gabin had called him. *He* could not possibly fail to find out that I was only in a state of lethargy; he would do whatever might be necessary to rouse me, so I longed for his arrival with feverish anxiety.

The day was drawing to a close. Madame Gabin, anxious to waste no time, had brought in her lamp-shades and summoned Dédé without asking Marguerite's permission. "To tell the truth," she observed, "I do not like to leave children too long alone."

"Come in, I say," she whispered to the little girl, "come in, and don't be frightened. Only don't look towards the bed, or you'll catch it."

She thought it decorous to forbid Dédé to look at me, but I was convinced that the child was furtively glancing at the corner where I lay, for every now and then I heard her mother rap her knuckles and repeat angrily: "Get on with your work, or you shall leave the room, and the gentleman will come during the night and pull you by the feet."

The mother and daughter had sat down at our table. I could plainly hear the click of their scissors as they clipped the lamp-shades, which no doubt required very delicate manipulation, for they did not work rapidly. I counted the shades one by one as they were laid aside, while my anxiety grew more and more intense.

The clicking of the scissors was the only noise in the room, so I concluded that Marguerite had been overcome by fatigue and was dozing. Twice Simoneau rose up, and the torturing thought flashed through me that he might be taking advantage of her slumbers to touch her hair with his lips. I hardly knew the man, and yet I felt sure that he loved my wife. At last little Dédé began to giggle, and her laugh exasperated me.

"Why are you sniggering, you idiot?" asked her mother. "Do you want to be turned out on the landing? Come, out with it; what makes you laugh so?"

The child stammered: she had not laughed, she had only coughed;

but I felt certain that she had seen Simoneau bending over Marguerite, and had felt amused.

The lamp had been lit, when a knock was heard at the door.

"It must be the doctor at last," said the old woman.

It was the doctor; he did not apologise for coming so late, for he had no doubt ascended many flights of stairs during the day. The room being but imperfectly lighted by the lamp, he inquired: "Is the body here?"

"Yes, it is," answered Simoneau.

Marguerite had risen, trembling violently. Madame Gabin dismissed Dédé, saying it was useless that a child should be present, and she then tried to lead my wife to the window, to spare her the sight of what was about to take place.

The doctor quickly approached the bed. I guessed that he was bored, tired, and impatient. Had he touched my wrist? had he placed his hand on my heart? I could not tell; but I fancied that he had only carelessly bent over me.

"Shall I bring the lamp, so that you may see better?" asked Simoneau obligingly.

"No, it is not necessary," quietly answered the doctor.

Not necessary! That man held my life in his hands, and he did not think it worth while to proceed to a careful examination! I was not dead! I wanted to cry out that I was not dead!

"At what o'clock did he die?" asked the doctor.

"At six this morning," volunteered Simoneau.

A feeling of frenzy and rebellion rose within me, bound as I was in seemingly iron chains. Oh, for the power of uttering one word, of moving a single limb!

"This close weather is unhealthy," resumed the doctor; "nothing is more trying than these early spring days."

And then he moved away. It was like my life departing. Screams, sobs, and insults were choking me, struggling in my convulsed throat, in which even my breath was arrested. The wretch! Turned into a mere machine by professional habits, he only came to a deathbed to accomplish a perfunctory formality; he knew nothing, his science was a lie, since he could not at a glance distinguish life from death—and now he was going—going!

"Good-night, sir," said Simoneau.

There came a moment's silence, the doctor was probably bowing to Marguerite, who had turned while Madame Gabin was fastening the window. He left the room, and I heard his footsteps descending the stairs.

It was all over; I was condemned. My last hope had vanished with that man. If I did not wake before eleven on the morrow I should be buried alive. The horror of that thought was so great that I lost all consciousness of my surroundings—'twas something like a fainting fit in death. The last sound I heard was the clicking of the scissors handled by Madame Gabin and Dédé. The funeral vigil had begun; nobody spoke.

Marguerite had refused to retire to rest in the neighbour's room. She remained reclining in her arm-chair, with her beautiful face pale, her eyes closed, and her long lashes wet with tears, while before her in the gloom Simoneau sat silently watching her.

III

I CANNOT describe my agony during the morning of the following day. I remember it as a hideous dream, in which my impressions were so ghastly and so confused that I could not formulate them. The persistent yearning for a sudden awakening increased my torture; and as the hour for the funeral drew nearer, my anguish became more poignant still.

It was only at daybreak that I had recovered a fuller consciousness of what was going on around me. The creaking of hinges first startled me out of my stupor. Madame Gabin had just opened the window. It must have been about seven o'clock, for I heard the cries of hawkers in the street, the shrill voice of a girl offering groundsel, and the hoarse voice of a man shouting "Carrots!" The clamorous awakening of Paris pacified me at first. I could not believe that I should be laid under the sod in the midst of so much life; and, besides, a sudden thought helped to calm me. It had just occurred to me that I had witnessed a case similar to my own while I was employed at the hospital of Guérande. A man had been sleeping for twenty-eight hours, the doctors hesitating in presence of his apparent lifelessness, when suddenly he had sat up in bed, and was almost at once able to rise.

I myself had already been asleep for some twenty-five hours; if I awoke at ten I should still be in time.

I endeavoured to ascertain who was in the room and what was going on there. Dédé must have been playing on the landing, for once when the door opened I heard her shrill childish laughter outside. Simoneau must have retired, for nothing indicated his presence. Madame Gabin's slipshod tread was still audible over the floor. At last she spoke.

"Come, my dear," she said. "It is wrong of you not to take it while it is hot. It would cheer you up."

She was addressing Marguerite, and a slow trickling sound as of something filtering indicated that she had been making some coffee.

"I don't mind owning," she continued, "that I needed it. At my age sitting up *is* trying. The night seems so dreary when there is a misfortune in the house. *Do* have a cup of coffee, my dear—just a drop."

She persuaded Marguerite to taste it.

"Isn't it nice and hot?" she continued; "and doesn't it set one up? Ah! you'll be wanting all your strength presently for what you've got to go through today. Now, if you were sensible you'd step into my room and just wait there."

"No; I want to stay here," said Marguerite resolutely.

Her voice, which I had not heard since the previous evening, touched me strangely. It was changed, broken as by tears. To feel my dear wife near me was a last consolation. I knew that her eyes were fastened on me, and that she was weeping with all the anguish of her heart.

The minutes flew by. An inexplicable noise sounded from beyond the door. It seemed as if some people were bringing a bulky piece of furniture upstairs, and knocking against the walls as they did so. Suddenly I understood, as I heard Marguerite begin to sob: it was the coffin.

"You are too early," said Madame Gabin crossly. "Put it behind the bed."

What o'clock was it? Nine, perhaps. So the coffin had come. Amid the opaque night around me I could see it plainly, quite new, with roughly planed boards. Heavens! was this the end, then? Was I to be borne off in that box which I realised was lying at my feet?

However, I had one supreme joy. Marguerite, in spite of her weakness, insisted upon discharging all the last offices. Assisted by the old woman, she dressed me with all the tenderness of a wife and a sister. Once more I felt myself in her arms as she clothed me in various garments. She paused at times, overcome by grief; she clasped me convulsively, and her tears rained on my face. Oh! how I longed to return her embrace, and cry, "I live!" And yet I was lying there powerless, motionless, inert!

"You are very foolish," suddenly said Madame Gabin; "it is all wasted."

"Never mind," answered Marguerite, sobbing. "I want him to wear his very best things."

I understood that she was dressing me in the clothes I had worn on my wedding-day. I had kept them carefully for great occasions. When she had finished she fell back exhausted in the arm-chair.

Simoneau now spoke; he had probably just entered the room.

"They are below," he whispered.

"Well, it ain't any too soon," answered Madame Gabin, also lowering her voice. "Tell them to come up and get it over."

"But I dread the despair of the poor little wife."

The old woman seemed to reflect and presently resumed: "Listen to me, Monsieur Simoneau. You must take her off to my room. I wouldn't have her stop here. It is for her own good. When she is out of the way we'll get it done in a jiffy."

These words pierced my heart, and my anguish was intense when I realised that a struggle was actually taking place. Simoneau had walked up to Marguerite imploring her to leave the room.

"Do, for pity's sake, come with me!" he pleaded. "Spare yourself useless pain."

"No, no!" she cried, "I will remain till the last minute. Remember that I have only him in the world, and when he is gone I shall be all alone!"

From the bedside Madame Gabin was prompting the young man.

"Don't parley—take hold of her—carry her off in your arms."

Was Simoneau about to lay his hands on Marguerite and bear her away? She screamed. I wildly endeavoured to rise, but the springs of my limbs were broken. I remained rigid, unable even to lift my eyelids to see what was going on. The struggle continued, and my

wife clung to the furniture, repeating—"Oh, don't, don't! Have mercy! Let me go! I will not—"

He must have lifted her in his stalwart arms, for I heard her moaning like a child. He bore her away, her sobs were lost in the distance, and I fancied I saw them both—he, tall and strong, pressing her to his breast; she fainting, powerless and conquered, following him wherever he listed.

"Drat it all! what a to-do!" muttered Madame Gabin. "Now for the tug of war, as the coast is clear at last."

In my jealous madness I looked upon this incident as a monstrous outrage. I had not been able to see Marguerite for twenty-four hours, but at least I had still heard her voice. Now even this was denied me; she had been torn away, a man had eloped with her even before I was laid under the sod. He was alone with her, on the other side of the wall, comforting her—embracing her perhaps!

But the door opened once more, and heavy footsteps shook the floor.

"Quick, make haste," repeated Madame Gabin. "Get it done before the lady comes back."

She was speaking to some strangers, who merely answered her with uncouth grunts.

"You understand," she went on, "I am not a relation, I'm only a neighbour. I have no interest in the matter. It is out of pure good-nature that I have mixed myself up in their affairs. And it ain't over cheerful, I can tell you. Yes, yes, I sat up the whole blessed night—it was pretty cold, too, about four o'clock. That's a fact. Well, I have always been a fool—I'm too soft-hearted."

The coffin had been dragged into the centre of the room. As I had not awakened I was condemned. All clearness departed from my ideas; everything seemed to revolve in a black haze; and I experienced such utter lassitude that it seemed almost a relief to leave off hoping.

"They haven't spared the material," said one of the undertaker's men in a gruff voice. "The box is too long."

"He'll have all the more room," said the other, laughing.

I was not heavy, and they chuckled over it since they had three flights of stairs to descend. As they were seizing me by the shoulders and feet, I heard Madame Gabin fly into a violent passion.

"You cursed little brat," she screamed, "what do you mean by

poking your nose where you're not wanted? Look here, I'll teach you to spy and pry."

Dédé had slipped her tousled head through the doorway to see how the gentleman was being put into the box. Two ringing slaps resounded, however, followed by an explosion of sobs. And as soon as the mother returned she began to gossip about her daughter for the benefit of the two men who were settling me in the coffin.

"She is only ten, you know. She is not a bad girl, but she is frightfully inquisitive. I do not beat her often, only I *will* be obeyed."

"Oh," said one of the men, "all kids are alike. Whenever there is a corpse lying about they always want to see it."

I was commodiously stretched out, and I might have thought myself still in my bed, had it not been that my left arm felt a trifle cramped from being squeezed against a board. The man had been right. I was pretty comfortable inside on account of my diminutive stature.

"Stop!" suddenly exclaimed Madame Gabin. "I promised his wife to put a pillow under his head."

The men, who were in a hurry, stuffed in the pillow roughly. One of them, who had mislaid his hammer, began to swear. He had left the tool below, and went to fetch it, dropping the lid; and when two sharp blows of the hammer drove in the first nail, a shock ran through my being—I had ceased to live. The nails then entered in rapid succession with a rhythmical cadence. It was as if some packers had been closing a case of dried fruit with easy dexterity. After that such sounds as reached me were deadened and strangely prolonged, as if the deal coffin had been changed into a huge musical-box. The last words spoken in the room of the Rue Dauphine—at least the last ones that I heard distinctly—were uttered by Madame Gabin.

"Mind the staircase," she said; "the banister of the second flight isn't safe, so be careful."

While I was being carried down, I experienced a sensation similar to that of pitching, as when one is on board a ship in a rough sea. However, from that moment my impressions became more and more vague. I remember that the only distinct thought that still possessed me was an imbecile impulsive curiosity as to the road by which I should be taken to the cemetery. I was not acquainted with a single street of Paris, and I was ignorant of the position of the large burial

grounds (though, of course, I had occasionally heard their names), and yet every effort of my mind was directed towards ascertaining whether we were turning to the right or to the left. Meanwhile, the jolting of the hearse, over the paving stones, the rumbling of passing vehicles, the steps of the foot-passengers, all created a confused clamour, intensified by the acoustical properties of the coffin.

At first I followed our course pretty closely; then came a halt. I was again lifted and carried about, and I concluded that we were in church; but when the funeral procession once more moved onwards, I lost all consciousness of the road we took. A ringing of bells informed me that we were passing another church, and then the softer and easier progress of the wheels indicated that we were skirting a garden or park. I was like a victim being taken to the gallows, awaiting in stupor a death-blow that never came.

At last they stopped and pulled me out of the hearse. The business proceeded rapidly. The noises had ceased; I knew that I was in a deserted space amid avenues of trees, and with the broad sky over my head. No doubt a few persons followed the bier, some of the inhabitants of the lodging-house perhaps—Simoneau and others, for instance—for faint whisperings reached my ear. Then I heard a psalm chanted, and some Latin words mumbled by a priest, and afterwards I suddenly felt myself sinking, while the ropes rubbing against the edges of the coffin elicited lugubrious sounds as if a bow were being drawn across the strings of a cracked violoncello. It was the end. On the left side of my head I felt a violent shock like that produced by the bursting of a bomb; with another under my feet, and a third more violent still on my chest. So forcible indeed was this last one that I thought the lid was cleft atwain. I fainted from it.

IV

It is impossible for me to say how long my swoon lasted. Eternity is not of longer duration than one second spent in nihility. I was no more. It was slowly and confusedly that I regained some degree of consciousness. I was still asleep, but I began to dream; a nightmare started into shape amidst the blackness of my horizon; a nightmare compounded of a strange fancy which in other days had haunted my

morbid imagination, whenever with my propensity for dwelling upon hideous thoughts I had conjured up catastrophes.

Thus I dreamed that my wife was expecting me somewhere—at Guérande, I believe—and that I was going to join her by rail. As we passed through a tunnel a deafening roll thundered over our head, and a sudden subsidence blocked up both issues of the tunnel, leaving our train intact in the centre. We were walled up by blocks of rock in the heart of a mountain. Then a long and fearful agony commenced. No assistance could possibly reach us; even with powerful engines and incessant labour it would take a month to clear the tunnel. We were prisoners there with no outlet, and so our death was only a question of time.

My fancy had often dwelt on that hideous drama and had constantly varied the details and touches. My actors were men, women, and children; their number increased to hundreds, and they were ever furnishing me with new incidents. There were some provisions in the train, but these were soon exhausted, and the hungry passengers, if they did not actually devour human flesh, at least fought furiously over the last piece of bread. Sometimes an aged man was driven back with blows and slowly perished; a mother struggled like a she-wolf to keep three or four mouthfuls for her child. In my own compartment a bride and bridegroom were dying, clasped in each other's arms in mute despair.

The line was free along the whole length of the train, and people came and went, prowling round the carriages like beasts of prey in search of carrion. All classes were mingled together. A millionaire, a high functionary, it was said, wept on a workman's shoulder. The lamps had been extinguished from the first, and the engine fire was nearly out. To pass from one carriage to another it was necessary to grope about, and thus, too, one slowly reached the engine, recognisable by its enormous barrel, its cold motionless flanks, its useless strength, its grim silence in the overwhelming night. Nothing could be more appalling than this train entombed alive with its passengers perishing one by one.

I gloated over the ghastliness of each detail; howls resounded through the vault; somebody, whom one could not see, whose vicinity was not even suspected, would suddenly drop upon another's shoulder. But what affected me most of all was the cold and the want of air. I

have never felt so chilled; a mantle of snow seemed to enwrap me, heavy moisture rained upon my skull, I was gasping; the rocky vault appeared to crush my chest, the whole mountain was seemingly weighing upon me.

Suddenly a cry of deliverance sounded. For some time past we had fancied we could hear a dull sound, and we tried to hope that men were at work and that help was coming; but it came not thus. One of the passengers, however, had discovered an air shaft in the tunnel, and crowding round we all saw this shaft, above which we could discern a blue patch about the size of a wafer. That blue patch filled us with rapture, for it was the sky. We stretched ourselves and stood on tip-toes to breathe more freely. Then we distinguished some black specks moving about, specks that must surely be workmen about to deliver us. A furious clamour arose. The cry, "Saved! saved!" burst from every mouth, while trembling arms were uplifted towards the tiny azure patch above.

That roar of voices aroused me. Where was I? In the tunnel, of course. I was lying at full length, hard walls were pressing against my ribs. Then I attempted to rise and struck my head roughly. Was it the rock closing in on all sides? The blue speck had vanished —ay, the sky had disappeared—and I was still suffocating, shivering, with chattering teeth.

All at once I remembered. Intense horror raised my hair on end. I felt the hideous truth freeze me from head to foot like ice. I had shaken off the long coma which for so many hours had stricken me with corpse-like rigidity. Yes, I could move; my hands could feel the boards of my coffin, my lips parted, words came to me, and instinctively I called out Marguerite's name. It was a scream I raised. In that deal box my voice took so hoarse and weird a sound that it terrified me. Oh, my God! was this thing true? I was able to walk, speak, cry out that I was living, and yet my voice could not be heard; I was entombed under the earth.

I made a desperate effort to remain calm and reflect. Was there no means of getting out? Then my dream began afresh in my troubled brain. The fanciful air-shaft, with the blue bit of sky overhead, was mingled with the real grave in which I was lying. I stared at the darkness with widely opened eyes; perhaps I might discover a hole, a slit, a glimmer of light; but only sparks of fire flitted through that night,

with rays that broadened and then faded away. I was in a sombre abyss again. With returning lucidity I struggled against these fatal visions. Indeed, I should need all my reason if I meant to try to save myself.

The most immediate peril lay in an increasing sense of suffocation. If I had been able to live so long without air, it was owing to suspended animation, which had changed all the normal conditions of my existence; but now that my heart beat and my lungs breathed, I should die asphyxiated if I did not promptly liberate myself. I also suffered from cold, and dreaded lest I should succumb to the mortal numbness of those who fall asleep in the snow never to wake again. Still, while unceasingly realising the necessity of remaining calm, I felt maddening blasts sweep through my brain; and to quiet my senses I exhorted myself to patience, trying to remember the circumstances of my burial. Probably the ground had been bought for five years, and this would be against my chances of self-deliverance, for I remembered having noticed at Nantes that in the trenches of the common graves one end of the last lowered coffins protruded into the next open cavity, in which case I should only have had to break through one plank. But if I were in a separate hole, filled up above me with earth, the obstacles would prove too great. Had I not been told that the dead were buried six feet deep in Paris? How was I to get through the enormous mass of soil above me? Even if I succeeded in slitting the lid of my bier open, the mould would drift in like fine sand and fill my mouth and eyes. That would be death again, a ghastly death, like drowning in mud.

However, I began to feel the planks carefully. The coffin was roomy, and I found that I was able to move my arms with tolerable ease. On both sides the roughly planed boards were stout and resistive. I slipped my arm on to my chest to raise it over my head. There I discovered in the top plank a knot in the wood which yielded slightly at my pressure. Working laboriously I finally succeeded in driving out this knot, and on passing my finger through the hole I found that the earth above was wet and clayey. But that availed me little. I even regretted having removed the knot, vaguely dreading the irruption of the mould. A second experiment occupied me for a while. I tapped all over the coffin to ascertain if perchance there were any vacuum outside. But the sound was everywhere the same.

At last, as I was slightly kicking the foot of the coffin, I fancied that it gave out a clearer echoing noise; but that might merely be produced by the sonority of the wood.

At any rate I began to press against the boards with my arms and my closed fists. In the same way too I used my knees, my back, and my feet without eliciting even a creak from the wood. I strained with all my strength; indeed with so desperate an effort of my whole frame, that my bruised bones seemed breaking. But nothing moved and I became insane.

Until that moment I had held delirium at bay. I had mastered the intoxicating rage which was mounting to my head like the fumes of alcohol; I had silenced my screams, for I feared that if I again cried out aloud I should be undone. But now I yelled, I shouted; unearthly howls which I could not repress came from my relaxed throat. I called for help in a voice that I did not recognize, growing wilder with each fresh appeal, and crying out that I would not die. I also tore at the wood with my nails; I writhed with the contortions of a caged wolf. I do not know how long this fit of madness lasted, but I can still feel the relentless hardness of the box that imprisoned me; I can still hear the storm of shrieks and sobs with which I filled it; a remaining glimmer of reason made me try to stop, but I could not do so.

Great exhaustion followed. I lay waiting for death in a state of somnolent pain. The coffin was like stone, which no effort could break, and the conviction that I was powerless left me unnerved, without courage to make any fresh attempts. Another suffering—hunger—was presently added to cold and want of air. The torture soon became intolerable. With my finger I tried to pull small pinches of earth through the hole of the dislodged knot, and I swallowed them eagerly, only increasing my torment. Tempted by my flesh, I bit my arms and sucked my skin with a fiendish desire to drive my teeth in; but I was afraid of drawing blood.

Then I ardently longed for death. All my life long I had trembled at the thought of dissolution, but I had come to yearn for it, to crave for an everlasting night that could never be dark enough. How childish it had been of me to dread the long dreamless sleep, the eternity of silence and gloom! Death was kind, for in suppressing life it put an end to suffering. Oh! to sleep like the stones, to be no more!

With groping hands I still continued feeling the wood, and suddenly I pricked my left thumb. That slight pain roused me from my growing numbness. What could have caused it? I felt again, and found a nail—a nail which the undertaker's men had driven in crookedly and which had not caught in the lower wood. It was long and very sharp; the head was secured to the lid, but it moved. Henceforth I had but one idea—to possess myself of that nail; and I slipped my right hand across my body and began to shake it. I made but little progress, however, it was a difficult job; for my hands soon tired, and I had to use them alternately. The left one, too, was of little use, on account of the nail's awkward position.

While I was obstinately persevering, a plan dawned on my mind. That nail meant salvation, and I must have it. But should I get it in time? Hunger was torturing me, my brain was swimming, my limbs were losing their strength, my mind was becoming confused. I had sucked the drops that trickled from my punctured finger, and suddenly I bit my arm and drank my own blood! Thereupon, spurred on by pain, revived by the tepid acrid liquor that moistened my lips, I tore desperately at the nail and at last I wrenched it off!

I then believed in success. My plan was a simple one. I pushed the point of the nail into the lid, dragging it along as far as I could in a straight line, and working it so as to make a slit in the wood. My fingers stiffened, but I doggedly persevered, and when I fancied that I had sufficiently cut into the board I turned on my stomach, and lifting myself on my knees and elbows thrust the whole strength of my back against the lid. But although it creaked, it did not yield; the notched line was not deep enough. I had to resume my old position—which I only managed to do with infinite trouble—and work afresh. At last, after another supreme effort, the lid was cleft from end to end.

I was not saved as yet, but my heart beat with renewed hope. I had ceased pushing and remained motionless, lest a sudden fall of earth should bury me. I intended to use the lid as a screen, and thus protected to open a sort of shaft in the clayey soil. Unfortunately I was assailed by unexpected difficulties. Some heavy clods of earth weighed upon the boards and made them unmanageable: I foresaw that I should never reach the surface in that way, for the mass of soil was already bending my spine and crushing my face.

Once more I stopped affrighted; then suddenly, while I was stretching out my legs trying to find something firm against which I might rest my feet, I felt the end board of the coffin yielding. I at once gave a desperate kick with my heels, in the faint hope that there might be a freshly dug grave in that direction.

It was so. My feet abruptly forced their way into space. An open grave was there; I had only a slight partition of earth to displace, and soon I rolled into the cavity. I was saved!

I remained for a time lying on my back in the open grave, with my eyes raised to heaven. It was dark, the stars were shining in a sky of velvety blueness. Now and then the rising breeze wafted a spring-like freshness, a perfume of foliage upon me. I was saved! I could breathe, I felt warm; and I wept, and I stammered, with my arms prayerfully extended towards the starry sky. O God! how sweet seemed life!

V

My first impulse was to find the custodian of the cemetery and ask him to have me conducted home, but various thoughts that came to me restrained me from following that course. My return would create general alarm; why should I hurry now that I was master of the situation? I felt my limbs; I had only an insignificant wound on my left arm, where I had bitten myself; and a slight feverishness lent me unhoped-for strength. I should no doubt be able to walk unaided.

Still I lingered; all sorts of dim visions confused my mind. I had felt beside me in the open grave some sextons' tools which had been left there, and I conceived a sudden desire to repair the damage I had done, to close up the hole through which I had crept, so as to conceal all traces of my resurrection. I do not believe that I had any positive motive in doing so. I only deemed it useless to proclaim my adventure aloud, feeling ashamed to find myself alive when the whole world thought me dead. In half an hour every trace of my escape was obliterated, and then I climbed out of the hole.

The night was splendid, and deep silence reigned in the cemetery; the black trees threw motionless shadows over the white tombs. When I endeavoured to ascertain my bearings, I noticed that one half of the sky was ruddy as if lit up by a huge conflagration; Paris lay in

that direction, and I moved towards it, following a long avenue, amid the darkness of the branches.

However, after I had gone some fifty yards I was compelled to stop, feeling faint and weary. I then sat down on a stone bench, and for the first time looked at myself. I was fully attired with the exception that I had no hat. I blessed my beloved Marguerite for the pious thought which had prompted her to dress me in my best clothes—those which I had worn at our wedding. That remembrance of my wife brought me to my feet again. I longed to see her without delay.

At the further end of the avenue I had taken, a wall arrested my progress. However, I climbed to the top of a monument, reached the summit of the wall, and then dropped over the other side. Although roughly shaken by the fall, I managed to walk for a few minutes along a broad deserted street skirting the cemetery. I had no notion as to where I might be, but with the reiteration of monomania I kept saying to myself that I was going towards Paris, and that I should find the Rue Dauphine somehow or other. Several people passed me but, seized with sudden distrust, I would not stop them and ask my way. I have since realised that I was then in a burning fever, and already nearly delirious. Finally, just as I reached a large thoroughfare, I became giddy and fell heavily upon the pavement.

Here there is a blank in my life. For three whole weeks I remained unconscious. When I awoke at last I found myself in a strange room. A man who was nursing me told me quietly that he had picked me up one morning on the Boulevard Montparnasse, and had brought me to his house. He was an old doctor who had given up practising.

When I attempted to thank him, he sharply answered that my case had seemed a curious one, and that he had wished to study it. Moreover, during the first few days of my convalescence he would not allow me to ask a single question; and later on, he never put one to me. For eight days longer I remained in bed, feeling very weak, and not even trying to remember, for memory was a weariness and a pain. I felt half ashamed and half afraid. As soon as I could leave the house I would go and find out whatever I wanted to know. Possibly in the delirium of fever a name had escaped me; however, the doctor never alluded to anything I may have said. His charity was not only generous, it was discreet.

The summer had come at last, and one warm June morning I was

at last permitted to take a short walk. The sun was shining with that joyous brightness which imparts renewed youth to the streets of old Paris. I went along slowly, questioning the passers-by at every crossing I came to, and asking the way to the Rue Dauphine. When I reached the street I had some difficulty in recognising the lodging-house where we had alighted on our arrival in the capital. A childish terror made me hesitate. If I appeared suddenly before Marguerite, the shock might kill her. It might be wiser to begin by revealing myself to our neighbour, Madame Gabin; still I shrank from taking a third party into confidence. I seemed unable to arrive at a resolution, and yet in my innermost heart I felt a great void, like that left by some sacrifice long since consummated.

The building looked quite yellow in the sunshine. I had just recognised it by a shabby eating-house on the ground floor, where we had ordered our meals, having them sent up to us. Then I raised my eyes to the last window of the third floor on the left-hand side, and as I looked at it a young woman with tumbled hair, wearing a loose dressing-gown, appeared and leant her elbows on the sill. A young man followed and printed a kiss upon her neck. It was not Marguerite. Still I felt no surprise. It seemed to me that I had dreamt all this, with other things too, which I was to learn presently.

For a moment I remained in the street, uncertain whether I had better go upstairs and question the lovers, who were still laughing in the sunshine. However, I decided to enter the little restaurant below. When I started on my walk, the old doctor had placed a five-franc piece in my hand. No doubt I was changed beyond recognition, for my beard had grown during the brain fever, and my face was wrinkled and haggard. As I took a seat at a small table, I saw Madame Gabin come in carrying a cup; she wished to buy a penny-worth of coffee. Standing in front of the counter, she began to gossip with the landlady of the establishment.

"Well," asked the latter, "so the poor little woman of the third floor has made up her mind at last, eh?"

"How could she help herself?" answered Madame Gabin; "it was the very best thing for her to do. Monsieur Simoneau showed her so much kindness. You see, he had finished his business in Paris to his satisfaction, for he has inherited a pot of money. Well, he offered to take

her away with him to his own part of the country, and place her with an aunt of his, who wants a housekeeper and companion."

The landlady laughed archly. I buried my face in a newspaper which I picked off the table. My lips were white and my hands shook.

"It will end in a marriage of course," resumed Madame Gabin. "The little widow mourned for her husband very properly, and the young man was extremely well-behaved. Well, they left last night—and after all they were free to please themselves."

Just then the side door of the restaurant communicating with the passage of the house opened, and Dédé appeared.

"Mother, ain't you coming?" she cried. "I'm waiting, you know; do be quick."

"Presently," said the mother testily. "Don't bother."

The girl stood listening to the two women, with the precocious shrewdness of a child born and reared amid the streets of Paris.

"When all is said and done," explained Madame Gabin, "the dear departed did not come up to Monsieur Simoneau. I didn't fancy him over much; he was a puny sort of a man, a poor fretful fellow—and he hadn't a penny to bless himself with. No, candidly, he wasn't the kind of husband for a young and healthy wife, whereas Monsieur Simoneau is rich, you know, and as strong as a Turk."

"Oh, yes!" interrupted Dédé, "I saw him once when he was washing —his door was open. His arms are so hairy!"

"Get along with you," screamed the old woman, shoving the girl out of the restaurant. "You are always poking your nose where it has no business to be."

Then she concluded with these words: "Look here, to my mind the other one did quite right to take himself off. It was fine luck for the little woman!"

When I found myself in the street again, I walked along slowly with trembling limbs. And yet I was not suffering much; I think I smiled once at my shadow in the sun. It was quite true. I *was* very puny. It had been a queer notion of mine to marry Marguerite. I recalled her weariness at Guérande, her impatience, her dull, monotonous life. The dear creature had been very good to me, but I had never been a real lover; she had mourned for me as a sister for her brother, not

otherwise. Why should I again disturb her life? A dead man is not jealous.

When I lifted my eyelids I saw the garden of the Luxembourg before me. I entered it, and took a seat in the sun, dreaming with a sense of infinite restfulness. The thought of Marguerite stirred me softly. I pictured her in the provinces beloved, petted, and very happy. She had grown handsomer, and she was the mother of three boys and two girls. It was all right. I had behaved like an honest man in dying, and I would not commit the cruel folly of coming to life again.

Since then I have travelled a good deal. I have been a little bit everywhere. I am an ordinary man who has toiled and eaten like anybody else. Death no longer frightens me, but it does not seem to care for me now that I have no motive in living; and I sometimes fear that I have been forgotten upon earth.

"Blow Up with the Brig!"

BY WILKIE COLLINS

(*1824-1889*)

I HAVE got an alarming confession to make. I am haunted by a Ghost.

If you were to guess for a hundred years, you would never guess what my ghost is. I shall make you laugh to begin with—and afterward I shall make your flesh creep. My Ghost is the ghost of a Bedroom Candlestick.

Yes, a bedroom candlestick and candle, or a flat candlestick and candle—put it which way you like—that is what haunts me. I wish it was something pleasanter and more out of the common way; a beautiful lady, or a mine of gold and silver, or a cellar of wine and a coach and horses, and such like. But, being what it is, I must take it for what it is, and make the best of it; and I shall thank you kindly if you will help me out by doing the same.

I am not a scholar myself, but I make bold to believe that the haunting of any man with anything under the sun begins with the frightening of him. At any rate, the haunting of me with a bedroom candlestick and candle began with the frightening of me with a bedroom candlestick and candle—the frightening of me half out of my life; and, for the time being, the frightening of me altogether out of my wits. That is not a very pleasant thing to confess before stating the particulars; but perhaps you will be the readier to believe that I am not a downright coward, because you find me bold enough to make a clean breast of it already, to my own great disadvantage so far.

Here are the particulars, as well as I can put them:

I was apprenticed to the sea when I was about as tall as my own walking-stick; and I made good enough use of my time to be fit for a mate's berth at the age of twenty-five years.

It was in the year eighteen hundred and eighteen, or nineteen, I am not quite certain which, that I reached the before-mentioned age of

twenty-five. You will please to excuse my memory not being very good for dates, names, numbers, places, and such like. No fear, though, about the particulars I have undertaken to tell you of; I have got them all ship-shape in my recollection; I can see them, at this moment, as clear as noonday in my own mind. But there is a mist over what went before, and, for the matter of that, a mist likewise over much that came after—and it's not very likely to lift at my time of life, is it?

Well, in eighteen hundred and eighteen, or nineteen, when there was peace in our part of the world—and not before it was wanted, you will say—there was fighting, of a certain scampering, scrambling kind, going on in that old battlefield which we seafaring men know by the name of the Spanish Main.

The possessions that belonged to the Spaniards in South America had broken into open mutiny and declared for themselves years before. There was plenty of bloodshed between the new Government and the old; but the new had got the best of it, for the most part, under one General Bolivar—a famous man in his time, though he seems to have dropped out of people's memories now. Englishmen and Irishmen with a turn for fighting, and nothing particular to do at home, joined the general as volunteers; and some of our merchants here found it a good venture to send supplies across the ocean to the popular side. There was risk enough, of course, in doing this; but where one speculation of the kind succeeded, it made up for two, at the least, that failed. And that's the true principle of trade, wherever I have met with it, all the world over.

Among the Englishmen who were concerned in this Spanish-American business, I, your humble servant, happened in a small way to be one.

I was then mate of a brig belonging to a certain firm in the City, which drove a sort of general trade, mostly in queer out-of-the-way places, as far from home as possible; and which freighted the brig, in the year I am speaking of, with a cargo of gunpowder for General Bolivar and his volunteers. Nobody knew anything about our instructions, when we sailed, except the captain; and he didn't half seem to like them. I can't rightly say how many barrels of powder we had on board, or how much each barrel held—I only know we had no other cargo. The name of the brig was the *Good Intent*—a queer name enough, you will tell me, for a vessel laden with gunpowder, and sent

to help a revolution. And as far as this particular voyage was concerned, so it was. I mean that for a joke, and I hope you will encourage me by laughing at it.

The *Good Intent* was the craziest old tub of a vessel I ever went to sea in, and the worst found in all respects. She was two hundred and thirty, or two hundred and eighty tons burden, I forget which; and she had a crew of eight, all told—nothing like as many as we ought by rights to have had to work the brig. However, we were well and honestly paid our wages; and we had to set that against the chance of foundering at sea, and, on this occasion, likewise the chance of being blown up into the bargain.

In consideration of the nature of our cargo, we were harassed with new regulations, which we didn't at all like, relative to smoking our pipes and lighting our lanterns; and, as usual in such cases, the captain, who made the regulations, preached what he didn't practice. Not a man of us was allowed to have a bit of lighted candle in his hand when he went below—except the skipper; and he used his light, when he turned in, or when he looked over his charts on the cabin table, just as usual.

This light was a common kitchen candle or "dip," and it stood in an old battered flat candlestick, with all the japan worn and melted off, and all the tin showing through. It would have been more seaman-like and suitable in every respect if he had had a lamp or a lantern; but he stuck to his old candlestick; and that same old candlestick has ever afterward stuck to *me*. That's another joke, if you please, and a better one than the first, in my opinion.

Well (I said "well" before, but it's a word that helps a man on like), we sailed in the brig, and shaped our course, first, for the Virgin Islands, in the West Indies; and, after sighting them, we made for the Leeward Islands next, and then stood on due south, till the lookout at the mast-head hailed the deck and said he saw land. That land was the coast of South America. We had had a wonderful voyage so far. We had lost none of our spars or sails, and not a man of us had been harassed to death at the pumps. It wasn't often the *Good Intent* made such a voyage as that, I can tell you.

I was sent aloft to make sure about the land, and I did make sure of it.

When I reported the same to the skipper, he went below, and had

a look at his letter of instructions and the chart. When he came on deck again, he altered our course a trifle to the eastward—I forget the point on the compass, but that don't matter. What I do remember is, that it was dark before we closed in with the land. We kept the lead going, and hove the brig to in from four to five fathoms water, or it might be six—I can't say for certain. I kept a sharp eye to the drift of the vessel, none of us knowing how the currents ran on that coast. We all wondered why the skipper didn't anchor; but he said No, he must first show a light at the foretopmasthead, and wait for an answering light on shore. We did wait, and nothing of the sort appeared. It was starlight and calm. What little wind there was came in puffs off the land. I suppose we waited, drifting a little to the westward, as I made it out, best part of an hour before anything happened—and then, instead of seeing the light on shore, we saw a boat coming toward us, rowed by two men only.

We hailed them, and they answered "Friends!" and hailed us by our name. They came on board. One of them was an Irishman, and the other was a coffee-coloured native pilot, who jabbered a little English.

The Irishman handed a note to our skipper, who showed it to me. It informed us that the part of the coast we were off was not oversafe for discharging our cargo, seeing that spies of the enemy (that is to say, of the old Government) had been taken and shot in the neighborhood the day before. We might trust the brig to the native pilot; and he had his instructions to take us to another part of the coast. The note was signed by the proper parties; so we let the Irishman go back alone in the boat, and allowed the pilot to exercise his lawful authority over the brig. He kept us stretching off from the land till noon the next day—his instructions, seemingly, ordering him to keep us well out of sight of the shore. We only altered our course in the afternoon, so as to close in with the land again a little before midnight.

This same pilot was about as ill-looking a vagabond as ever I saw; a skinny, cowardly, quarrelsome mongrel, who swore at the men in the vilest broken English, till they were everyone of them ready to pitch him overboard. The skipper kept them quiet, and I kept them quiet; for the pilot being given us by our instructions, we were bound to make the best of him. Near nightfall, however, with the best will in the world to avoid it, I was unlucky enough to quarrel with him.

He wanted to go below with his pipe, and I stopped him, of course, because it was contrary to orders. Upon that he tried to hustle by me, and I put him away with my hand. I never meant to push him down; but somehow I did. He picked himself up as quick as lightning, and pulled out his knife. I snatched it out of his hand, slapped his murderous face for him, and threw his weapon overboard. He gave me one ugly look, and walked aft. I didn't think much of the look then, but I remembered it a little too well afterward.

We were close in with the land again, just as the wind failed us, between eleven and twelve that night, and dropped our anchor by the pilot's directions.

It was pitch-dark, and a dead, airless calm. The skipper was on deck, with two of our best men for watch. The rest were below, except the pilot, who coiled himself up, more like a snake than a man, on the forecastle. It was not my watch till four in the morning. But I didn't like the look of the night, or the pilot, or the state of things generally, and I shook myself down on deck to get my nap there, and be ready for anything at a moment's notice. The last I remember was the skipper whispering to me that he didn't like the look of things either, and that he would go below and consult his instructions again. That is the last I remember, before the slow, heavy, regular roll of the old brig on the groundswell rocked me off to sleep.

I was awoke by a scuffle on the forecastle and a gag in my mouth. There was a man on my breast and a man on my legs, and I was bound hand and foot in half a minute.

The brig was in the hands of the Spaniards. They were swarming all over her. I heard six heavy splashes in the water, one after another. I saw the captain stabbed to the heart as he came running up the companion, and I heard a seventh splash in the water. Except myself, every soul of us on board had been murdered and thrown into the sea. Why I was left, I couldn't think, till I saw the pilot stoop over me with a lantern and look, to make sure of who I was. There was a devilish grin on his face, and he nodded his head at me, as much as to say, *You* were the man who hustled me down and slapped my face, and I mean to play the game of cat and mouse with you in return for it!

I could neither move nor speak, but I could see the Spaniards take off the main hatch and rig the purchases for getting up the cargo. A quarter of an hour afterward I heard the sweeps of a schooner, or other

small vessel, in the water. The strange craft was laid alongside of us, and the Spaniards set to work to discharge our cargo into her. They all worked hard except the pilot; and he came from time to time, with his lantern, to have another look at me, and to grin and nod always in the same devilish way. I am old enough now not to be ashamed of confessing the truth, and I don't mind acknowledging that the pilot frightened me.

The fright, and the bonds, and the gag, and the not being able to stir hand or foot, had pretty nigh worn me out by the time the Spaniards gave over work. This was just as the dawn broke. They had shifted a good part of our cargo on board their vessel, but nothing like all of it, and they were sharp enough to be off with what they had got before daylight.

I need hardly say that I had made up my mind by this time to the worst I could think of. The pilot, it was clear enough, was one of the spies of the enemy, who had wormed himself into the confidence of our consignees without being suspected. He, or more likely his employers, had got knowledge enough of us to suspect what our cargo was; we had been anchored for the night in the safest berth for them to surprise us in; and we had paid the penalty of having a small crew, and consequently an insufficient watch. All this was clear enough—but what did the pilot mean to do with *me?*

On the word of a man, it makes my flesh creep now, only to tell you what he did with me.

After all the rest of them were out of the brig, except the pilot and two Spanish seamen, these last took me up, bound and gagged as I was, lowered me into the hold of the vessel, and laid me along on the floor, lashing me to it with ropes' ends, so that I could just turn from one side to the other, but could not roll myself fairly over, so as to change my place. They then left me. Both of them were the worse for liquor; but the devil of a pilot was sober—mind that!—as sober as I am at the present moment.

I lay in the dark for a little while, with my heart thumping as if it was going to jump out of me. I lay about five minutes or so when the pilot came down into the hold alone.

He had the captain's cursed flat candlestick and a carpenter's awl in one hand, and a long thin twist of cotton-yarn, well oiled, in the other. He put the candlestick, with a new "dip" candle lighted in it, down

on the floor about two feet from my face, and close against the side of the vessel. The light was feeble enough; but it was sufficient to show a dozen barrels of gunpowder or more left all round me in the hold of the brig. I began to suspect what he was after the moment I noticed the barrels. The horrors laid hold of me from head to foot, and the sweat poured off my face like water.

I saw him go next to one of the barrels of powder standing against the side of the vessel in a line with the candle, and about three feet, or rather better, away from it. He bored a hole in the side of the barrel with his awl, and the horrid powder came trickling out, as black as hell, and dripped into the hollow of his hand, which he held to catch it. When he had got a good handful, he stopped up the hole by jamming one end of his oiled twist of cotton-yarn fast into it, and he then rubbed the powder into the whole length of the yarn till he had blackened every hair-breadth of it.

The next thing he did—as true as I sit here, as true as the heaven above us all—the next thing he did was to carry the free end of his long, lean, black, frightful slow-match to the lighted candle alongside my face. He tied it (the bloody-minded villain!) in several folds round the tallow dip, about a third of the distance down, measuring from the flame of the wick to the lip of the candlestick. He did that; he looked to see that my lashings were all safe; and then he put his face close to mine, and whispered in my ear, "Blow up with the brig!"

He was on deck again the moment after, and he and the two others shoved the hatch on over me. At the furthest end from where I lay they had not fitted it down quite true, and I saw a blink of daylight glimmering in when I looked in that direction. I heard the sweeps of the schooner fall into the water—splash! splash! fainter and fainter, as they swept the vessel out in the dead calm, to be ready for the wind in the offing. Fainter and fainter, splash, splash! for a quarter of an hour more.

While those sounds were in my ears, my eyes were fixed on the candle.

It had been freshly lighted. If left to itself, it would burn for between six and seven hours. The slow-match was twisted round it about a third of the way down, and therefore the flame would be about two hours reaching it. There I lay, gagged, bound, lashed to the floor; seeing my own life burning down with the candle by my side—there I

lay, alone on the sea, doomed to be blown to atoms, and to see that doom drawing on, nearer and nearer with every fresh second of time, through nigh on two hours to come: powerless to help myself, and speechless to call for help to others. The wonder to me is that I didn't cheat the flame, the slow-match, and the powder, and die of the horror of my situation before my first half-hour was out in the hold of the brig.

I can't exactly say how long I kept the command of my senses after I had ceased to hear the splash of the schooner's sweeps in the water. I can trace back everything I did and everything I thought, up to a certain point; but, once past that, I get all abroad, and lose myself in my memory now, much as I lost myself in my own feelings at the time.

The moment the hatch was covered over me, I began, as every other man would have begun in my place, with a frantic effort to free my hands. In the mad panic I was in, I cut my flesh with the lashings as if they had been knife-blades, but I never stirred them. There was less chance still of freeing my legs, or of tearing myself from the fastenings that held me to the floor. I gave in when I was all but suffocated for want of breath. The gag, you will please to remember, was a terrible enemy to me; I could only breathe freely through my nose—and that is but a poor vent when a man is straining his strength as far as ever it will go.

I gave in and lay quiet, and got my breath again, my eyes glaring and straining at the candle all the time.

While I was staring at it, the notion struck me of trying to blow out the flame by pumping a long breath at it suddenly through my nostrils. It was too high above me, and too far away from me, to be reached in that fashion. I tried, and tried, and tried; and then I gave in again, and lay quiet again, always with my eyes glaring at the candle, and the candle glaring at *me*. The splash of the schooner's sweeps was very faint by this time. I could only just hear them in the morning stillness. Splash! splash!—fainter and fainter—splash! splash!

Without exactly feeling my mind going, I began to feel it getting queer as early as this. The snuff of the candle was growing taller and taller, and the length of tallow between the flame and the slow-match, which was the length of my life, was getting shorter and shorter. I calculated that I had rather less than an hour and a half to live.

An hour and a half! Was there a chance in that time of a boat

pulling off to the brig from shore? Whether the land near which the vessel was anchored was in possession of our side, or in possession of the enemy's side, I made out that they must, sooner or later, send to hail the brig merely because she was a stranger in those parts. The question for *me* was, how soon? The sun had not risen yet, as I could tell by looking through the chink in the hatch. There was no coast village near us, as we all knew, before the brig was seized, by seeing no lights on shore. There was no wind, as I could tell by listening, to bring any strange vessel near. If I had had six hours to live, there might have been a chance for me, reckoning from sunrise to noon. But with an hour and a half, which had dwindled to an hour and a quarter by this time—or, in other words, with the earliness of the morning, the uninhabited coast, and the death calm all against me—there was not the ghost of a chance. As I felt that, I had another struggle—the last—with my bonds, and only cut myself the deeper for my pains. I gave in once more, and lay quiet, and listened for the splash of the sweeps.

Gone! Not a sound could I hear but the blowing of a fish now and then on the surface of the sea, and the creak of the brig's crazy old spars, as she rolled gently from side to side with the little swell there was on the quiet water.

An hour and a quarter. The wick grew terribly as the quarter slipped away, and the charred top of it began to thicken and spread out mushroom-shape. It would fall off soon. Would it fall off red-hot, and would the swing of the brig cant it over the side of the candle and let it down on the slow-match? If it would, I had about ten minutes to live instead of an hour.

This discovery set my mind for a minute on a new tack altogether. I began to ponder with myself what sort of a death blowing up might be. Painful! Well, it would be, surely, too sudden for that. Perhaps just one crash inside me, or outside me, or both; and nothing more! Perhaps not even a crash; that and death and the scattering of this living body of mine into millions of fiery sparks, might all happen in the same instant! I couldn't make it out; I couldn't settle how it would be. The minute of calmness in my mind left it before I had half done thinking; and I got all abroad again.

When I came back to my thoughts, or when they came back to me (I can't say which), the wick was awfully tall, the flame was burning

with a smoke above it, the charred top was broad and red, and heavily spreading out to its fall.

My despair and horror at seeing it took me in a new way, which was good and right, at any rate, for my poor soul. I tried to pray—in my own heart, you will understand, for the gag put all lip-praying out of my power. I tried, but the candle seemed to burn it up in me. I struggled hard to force my eyes from the slow, murdering flame, and to look up through the chink in the hatch at the blessed daylight. I tried once, tried twice; and gave it up. I next tried only to shut my eyes, and keep them shut—once—twice—and the second time I did it. "God bless old mother, and sister Lizzie; God keep them both, and forgive *me*." That was all I had time to say, in my own heart, before my eyes opened again, in spite of me, and the flame of the candle flew into them, flew all over me, and burned up the rest of my thoughts in an instant.

I couldn't hear the fish blowing now; I couldn't hear the creak of the spars; I couldn't think; I couldn't feel the sweat of my own death agony on my face—I could only look at the heavy, charred top of the wick. It swelled, tottered, bent over to one side, dropped—red-hot at the moment of its fall—black and harmless, even before the swing of the brig had canted it over into the bottom of the candlestick.

I caught myself laughing.

Yes! laughing at the safe fall of the bit of wick. But for the gag, I should have screamed with laughing. As it was, I shook with it inside me—shook till the blood was in my head, and I was all but suffocated for want of breath. I had just sense enough left to feel that my own horrid laughter at that awful moment was a sign of my brain going at last. I had just sense enough left to make another struggle before my mind broke loose like a frightened horse, and ran away with me.

One comforting look at the blink of daylight through the hatch was what I tried for once more. The fight to force my eyes from the candle and to get that one look at the daylight was the hardest I had had yet; and I lost the fight. The flame had hold of my eyes as fast as the lashings had hold of my hands. I couldn't look away from it. I couldn't even shut my eyes, when I tried that next, for the second time. There was the wick growing tall once more. There was the space of unburned candle between the light and the slow-match shortened to an inch or less.

How much life did that inch leave me? Three-quarters of an hour? Half an hour? Fifty minutes? Twenty minutes? Steady! an inch of tallow-candle would burn longer than twenty minutes. An inch of tallow! the notion of a man's body and soul being kept together by an inch of tallow! Wonderful! Why, the greatest king that sits on a throne can't keep a man's body and soul together; and here's an inch of tallow that can do what the king can't! There's something to tell mother when I get home which will surprise her more than all the rest of my voyages put together. I laughed inwardly again at the thought of that, and shook and swelled and suffocated myself, till the light of the candle leaped in through my eyes, and licked up the laughter, and burned it out of me, and made me all empty and cold and quiet once more.

Mother and Lizzie. I don't know when they came back; but they did come back—not, as it seemed to me, into my mind this time, but right down bodily before me, in the hold of the brig.

Yes: sure enough, there was Lizzie, just as light-hearted as usual, laughing at me. Laughing? Well, why not? Who is to blame Lizzie for thinking I'm lying on my back, drunk in the cellar, with the beer-barrels all round me? Steady! she's crying now—spinning round and round in a fiery mist, wringing her hands, screeching out for help—fainter and fainter, like the splash of the schooner's sweeps. Gone—burned up in the fiery mist! Mist? fire? no; neither one nor the other. It's mother makes the light—mother knitting, with ten flaming points at the ends of her fingers and thumbs, and slow-matches hanging in bunches all round her face instead of her own gray hair. Mother in her old arm-chair, and the pilot's long skinny hands hanging over the back of the chair, dripping with gunpowder. No! no gunpowder, no chair, no mother—nothing but the pilot's face, shining red-hot, like a sun, in the fiery mist; turning upside down in the fiery mist; running backward and forward along the slow-match, in the fiery mist; spinning millions of miles in a minute, in the fiery mist—spinning itself smaller and smaller into one tiny point, and that point darting on a sudden straight into my head—and then, all fire and all mist—no hearing, no seeing, no thinking, no feeling—the brig, the sea, my own self, the whole world, all gone together!

After what I've just told you, I know nothing and remember nothing, till I woke up (as it seemed to me) in a comfortable bed, with two

rough-and-ready men like myself sitting on each side of my pillow, and a gentleman standing watching me at the foot of the bed. It was about seven in the morning. My sleep (or what seemed like my sleep to me) had lasted better than eight months—I was among my own countrymen in the island of Trinidad—the men at each side of my pillow were my keepers, turn and turn about—and the gentleman standing at the foot of the bed was the doctor. What I said and did in those eight months, I never have known, and never shall. I woke out of it as if it had been one long sleep—that's all I know.

It was another two months or more before the doctor thought it safe to answer the questions I asked him.

The brig had been anchored, just as I had supposed, off a part of the coast which was lonely enough to make the Spaniards pretty sure of no interruption, so long as they managed their murderous work quietly under cover of night.

My life had not been saved from the shore, but from the sea. An American vessel, becalmed in the offing, had made out the brig as the sun rose; and the captain having his time on his hands in consequence of the calm, and seeing a vessel anchored where no vessel had any reason to be, had manned one of his boats and sent his mate with it, to look a little closer into the matter, and bring back a report of what he saw.

What he saw, when he and his men found the brig deserted and boarded her, was the gleam of candle-light through the chink in the hatchway. The flame was within about a thread's breath of the slow-match when he lowered himself into the hold; and if he had not had the sense and coolness to cut the match in two with his knife before he touched the candle, he and his men might have been blown up along with the brig as well as me. The match caught, and turned into sputtering red fire, in the very act of putting the candle out; and if the communication with the powder-barrel had not been cut off, the Lord only knows what might have happened.

What became of the Spanish schooner and the pilot, I have never heard from that day to this.

As for the brig, the Yankees took her, as they took me, to Trinidad, and claimed their salvage, and got it, I hope, for their own sakes. I was landed just in the same state as when they rescued me from the brig—that is to say, clean out of my senses. But please to remember,

it was a long time ago; and, take my word for it, I was discharged cured, as I have told you. Bless your hearts, I'm all right now, as you may see. I'm a little shaken by telling the story, as is only natural—a little shaken, my good friends, that's all.

The Three Strangers

BY THOMAS HARDY

(*1840-1928*)

AMONG the few features of agricultural England which retain an appearance but little modified by the lapse of centuries, may be reckoned the high, grassy and furzy downs, coombs, or ewe-leases, as they are indifferently called, that fill a large area of certain counties in the south and southwest. If any mark of human occupation is met with hereon, it usually takes the form of the solitary cottage of some shepherd.

Fifty years ago such a lonely cottage stood on such a down, and may possibly be standing there now. In spite of its loneliness, however, the spot, by actual measurement, was not more than five miles from a country-town. Yet that affected it little. Five miles of irregular upland, during the long inimical seasons, with their sleets, snows, rains, and mists, afford withdrawing space enough to isolate a Timon or a Nebuchadnezzar; much less, in fair weather, to please that less repellent tribe, the poets, philosophers, artists, and others who "conceive and meditate of pleasant things."

Some old earthen camp or barrow, some clump of trees, at least some starved fragment of ancient hedge is usually taken advantage of in the erection of these forlorn dwellings. But, in the present case, such a kind of shelter had been disregarded. Higher Crowstairs, as the house was called, stood quite detached and undefended. The only reason for its precise situation seemed to be the crossing of two footpaths at right angles hard by, which may have crossed there and thus for a good five hundred years. Hence the house was exposed to the elements on all sides. But, though the wind up here blew unmistakably when it did blow, and the rain hit hard whenever it fell, the various weathers of the winter season were not quite so formidable on the coomb as they were imagined to be by dwellers on low ground. The

raw rimes were not so pernicious as in the hollows, and the frosts were scarcely so severe. When the shepherd and his family who tenanted the house were pitied for their sufferings from the exposure, they said that upon the whole they were less inconvenienced by "wuzzes and flames" (hoarses and phlegms) than when they had lived by the stream of a snug neighbouring valley.

The night of March 28, 182—, was precisely one of the nights that were wont to call forth these expressions of commiseration. The level rainstorm smote walls, slopes, and hedges like the clothyard shafts of Senlac and Crecy. Such sheep and outdoor animals as had no shelter stood with their buttocks to the winds; while the tails of little birds trying to roost on some scraggy thorn were blown inside-out like umbrellas. The gable-end of the cottage was stained with wet, and the eavesdroppings flapped against the wall. Yet never was commiseration for the shepherd more misplaced. For that cheerful rustic was entertaining a large party in glorification of the christening of his second girl.

The guests had arrived before the rain began to fall, and they were all now assembled in the chief or living room of the dwelling. A glance into the apartment at eight o'clock on this eventful evening would have resulted in the opinion that it was as cosy and comfortable a nook as could be wished for in boisterous weather. The calling of its inhabitant was proclaimed by a number of highly-polished sheep-crooks without stems that were hung ornamentally over the fireplace, the curl of each shining crook varying from the antiquated type engraved in the patriarchal pictures of old family Bibles to the most approved fashion of the last local sheep-fair. The room was lighted by half-a-dozen candles, having wicks only a trifle smaller than the grease which enveloped them, in candlesticks that were never used but at high-days, holy-days, and family feasts. The lights were scattered about the room, two of them standing on the chimney-piece. This position of candles was in itself significant. Candles on the chimney-piece always meant a party.

On the hearth, in front of a back-brand to give substance, blazed a fire of thorns, that crackled "like the laughter of the fool."

Nineteen persons were gathered here. Of these, five women, wearing gowns of various bright hues, sat in chairs along the wall; girls shy and not shy filled the window-bench; four men, including Charley Jake the hedge-carpenter, Elijah New the parish-clerk, and John Pitcher, a

neighbouring dairyman, the shepherd's father-in-law, lolled in the settle; a young man and maid, who were blushing over tentative *pourparlers* on a life-companionship, sat beneath the corner-cupboard; and an elderly engaged man of fifty or upward moved restlessly about from spots where his betrothed was not to the spot where she was. Enjoyment was pretty general, and so much the more prevailed in being unhampered by conventional restrictions. Absolute confidence in each other's good opinion begat perfect ease, while the finishing stroke of manner, amounting to a truly princely serenity, was lent to the majority by the absence of any expression or trait denoting that they wished to get on in the world, enlarge their minds, or do any eclipsing thing whatever—which nowadays so generally nips the bloom and *bonhomie* of all except the two extremes of the social scale.

Shepherd Fennel had married well, his wife being a dairyman's daughter from a vale at a distance, who brought fifty guineas in her pocket—and kept them there, till they should be required for ministering to the needs of a coming family. This frugal woman had been somewhat exercised as to the character that should be given to the gathering. A sit-still party had its advantages; but an undisturbed position of ease in chairs and settles was apt to lead on the men to such an unconscionable deal of toping that they would sometimes fairly drink the house dry. A dancing-party was the alternative; but this, while avoiding the foregoing objection on the score of good drink, had a counterbalancing disadvantage in the matter of good victuals, the ravenous appetites engendered by the exercise causing immense havoc in the buttery. Shepherdess Fennel fell back upon the intermediate plan of mingling short dances with short periods of talk and singing, so as to hinder any ungovernable rage in either. But this scheme was entirely confined to her own gentle mind: the shepherd himself was in the mood to exhibit the most reckless phases of hospitality.

The fiddler was a boy of those parts, about twelve years of age, who had a wonderful dexterity in jigs and reels, though his fingers were so small and short as to necessitate a constant shifting for the high notes, from which he scrambled back to the first position with sounds not of unmixed purity of tone. At seven the shrill tweedle-dee of this youngster had begun, accompanied by a booming ground-bass from Elijah New, the parish-clerk, who had thoughtfully brought with him his favourite musical instrument, the serpent. Dancing was instan-

taneous, Mrs. Fennel privately enjoining the players on no account to let the dance exceed the length of a quarter of an hour.

But Elijah and the boy, in the excitement of their position, quite forgot the injunction. Moreover, Oliver Giles, a man of seventeen, one of the dancers, who was enamoured of his partner, a fair girl of thirty-three rolling years, had recklessly handed a new crown-piece to the musicians, as a bribe to keep going as long as they had muscle and wind. Mrs. Fennel, seeing the steam begin to generate on the countenances of her guests, crossed over and touched the fiddler's elbow and put her hand on the serpent's mouth. But they took no notice, and fearing she might lose her character of genial hostess if she were to interfere too markedly, she retired and sat down helpless. And so the dance whizzed on with cumulative fury, the performers moving in their planet-like courses, direct and retrograde, from apogee to perigee, till the hand of the well-kicked clock at the bottom of the room had traveled over the circumference of an hour.

While these cheerful events were in course of enactment within Fennel's pastoral dwelling, an incident having considerable bearing on the party had occurred in the gloomy night without. Mrs. Fennel's concern about the growing fierceness of the dance corresponded in point of time with the ascent of a human figure to the solitary hill of Higher Crowstairs from the direction of the distant town. This personage strode on through the rain without a pause, following the little-worn path which, further on in its course, skirted the shepherd's cottage.

It was nearly the time of full moon, and on this account, though the sky was lined with a uniform sheet of dripping cloud, ordinary objects out of doors were readily visible. The sad wan light revealed the lonely pedestrian to be a man of supple frame; his gait suggested that he had somewhat passed the period of perfect and instinctive agility, though not so far as to be otherwise than rapid of motion when occasion required. At a rough guess, he might have been about forty years of age. He appeared tall, but a recruiting sergeant, or other person accustomed to the judging of men's heights by the eye, would have discerned that this was chiefly owing to his gauntness, and that he was not more than five-feet-eight or nine.

Notwithstanding the regularity of his tread, there was caution in it, as in that of one who mentally feels his way; and despite the fact that it was not a black coat nor a dark garment of any sort that he wore,

there was something about him which suggested that he naturally belonged to the black-coated tribes of men. His clothes were of fustian, and his boots hobnailed, yet in his progress he showed not the mud-accustomed bearing of hobnailed and fustianed peasantry.

By the time that he had arrived abreast of the shepherd's premises the rain came down, or rather came along, with yet more determined violence. The outskirts of the little settlement partially broke the force of wind and rain, and this induced him to stand still. The most salient of the shepherd's domestic erections was an empty sty at the forward corner of his hedgeless garden, for in these latitudes the principle of masking the homelier features of your establishment by a conventional frontage was unknown. The traveler's eye was attracted to this small building by the pallid shine of the wet slates that covered it. He turned aside, and, finding it empty, stood under the pent roof for shelter.

While he stood, the boom of the serpent within the adjacent house, and the lesser strains of the fiddler, reached the spot as an accompaniment to the surging hiss of the flying rain on the sod, its louder beating on the cabbage-leaves of the garden, on the eight or ten beehives just discernible by the path, and its dripping from the eaves into a row of buckets and pans that had been placed under the walls of the cottage. For at Higher Crowstairs, as at all such elevated domiciles, the grand difficulty of housekeeping was an insufficiency of water; and a casual rainfall was utilized by turning out, as catchers, every utensil that the house contained. Some queer stories might be told of the contrivances for economy in suds and dish-waters that are absolutely necessitated in upland habitations during the droughts of summer. But at this season there were no such exigencies; a mere acceptance of what the skies bestowed was sufficient for an abundant store.

At last the notes of the serpent ceased and the house was silent. This cessation of activity aroused the solitary pedestrian from the reverie into which he had lapsed, and, emerging from the shed, with an apparently new intention, he walked up the path to the house-door. Arrived here, his first act was to kneel down on a large stone beside the row of vessels, and to drink a copious draught from one of them. Having quenched his thirst he rose and lifted his hand to knock, but paused with his eye upon the panel. Since the dark surface of the wood revealed absolutely nothing, it was evident that he must be

mentally looking through the door, as if he wished to measure thereby all the possibilities that a house of this sort might include, and how they might bear upon the question of his entry.

In his indecision he turned and surveyed the scene around. Not a soul was anywhere visible. The garden-path stretched downward from his feet, gleaming like the track of a snail; the roof of the little well (mostly dry), the well-cover, the top rail of the garden-gate, were varnished with the same dull liquid glaze; while, far away in the vale, a faint whiteness of more than usual extent showed that the rivers were high in the meads. Beyond all this winked a few bleared lamp-lights through the beating drops—lights that denoted the situation of the county-town from which he had appeared to come. The absence of all notes of life in that direction seemed to clinch his intentions, and he knocked at the door.

Within, a desultory chat had taken the place of movement and musical sound. The hedge-carpenter was suggesting a song to the company, which nobody just then was inclined to undertake, so that the knock afforded a not unwelcome diversion.

"Walk in!" said the shepherd promptly.

The latch clicked upward, and out of the night our pedestrian appeared upon the door-mat. The shepherd arose, snuffed two of the nearest candles, and turned to look at him.

Their light disclosed that the stranger was dark in complexion and not unprepossessing as to feature. His hat, which for a moment he did not remove, hung low over his eyes, without concealing that they were large, open, and determined, moving with a flash rather than a glance round the room. He seemed pleased with his survey, and, baring his shaggy head, said, in a rich deep voice, "The rain is so heavy, friends, that I ask leave to come in and rest awhile."

"To be sure, stranger," said the shepherd. "And faith, you've been lucky in choosing your time, for we are having a bit of a fling for a glad cause—though, to be sure, a man could hardly wish that glad cause to happen more than once a year."

"Nor less," spoke up a woman. "For 'tis best to get your family over and done with, as soon as you can, so as to be all the earlier out of the fag o't."

"And what may be this glad cause?" asked the stranger.

"A birth and christening," said the shepherd.

The stranger hoped his host might not be made unhappy either by too many or too few of such episodes, and being invited by a gesture to a pull at the mug, he readily acquiesced. His manner, which, before entering, had been so dubious, was now altogether that of a careless and candid man.

"Late to be traipsing athwart this coomb—hey?" said the engaged man of fifty.

"Late it is, master, as you say.—I'll take a seat in the chimney-corner, if you have nothing to urge against it, ma'am; for I am a little moist on the side that was next the rain."

Mrs. Shepherd Fennel assented, and made room for the self-invited comer, who, having got completely inside the chimney-corner, stretched out his legs and his arms with the expansiveness of a person quite at home.

"Yes, I am rather cracked in the vamp," he said freely, seeing that the eyes of the shepherd's wife fell upon his boots, "and I am not well fitted either. I have had some rough times lately, and have been forced to pick up what I can get in the way of wearing, but I must find a suit better fit for working-days when I reach home."

"One of hereabouts?" she inquired.

"Not quite that—further up the country."

"I thought so. And so be I; and by your tongue you come from my neighbourhood."

"But you would hardly have heard of me," he said quickly. "My time would be long before yours, ma'am, you see."

This testimony to the youthfulness of his hostess had the effect of stopping her cross-examination.

"There is only one thing more wanted to make me happy," continued the new-comer. "And that is a little baccy, which I am sorry to say I am out of."

"I'll fill your pipe," said the shepherd.

"I must ask you to lend me a pipe likewise."

"A smoker, and no pipe about 'ee?"

"I have dropped it somewhere on the road."

The shepherd filled and handed him a new clay pipe, saying, as he did so, "Hand me your baccy box—I'll fill that too, now I am about it."

The man went through the movement of searching his pockets.

"Lost that too?" said his entertainer, with some surprise.

"I am afraid so," said the man with some confusion. "Give it to me in a screw of paper." Lighting his pipe at the candle with a suction that drew the whole flame into the bowl, he resettled himself in the corner and bent his looks upon the faint steam from his damp legs, as if he wished to say no more.

Meanwhile the general body of guests had been taking little notice of this visitor by reason of an absorbing discussion in which they were engaged with the band about a tune for the next dance. The matter being settled, they were about to stand up when an interruption came in the shape of another knock at the door.

At sound of the same the man in the chimney-corner took up the poker and began stirring the brands as if doing it thoroughly were the one aim of his existence; and a second time the shepherd said, "Walk in!" In a moment another man stood upon the straw-woven door-mat. He too was a stranger.

This individual was one of a type radically different from the first. There was more of the commonplace in his manner, and a certain jovial cosmopolitanism sat upon his features. He was several years older than the first arrival, his hair being slightly frosted, his eyebrows bristly, and his whiskers cut back from his cheeks. His face was rather full and flabby, and yet it was not altogether a face without power. A few grog-blossoms marked the neighbourhood of his nose. He flung back his long drab greatcoat, revealing that beneath it he wore a suit of cinder-gray shade throughout, large heavy seals, of some metal or other that would take a polish, dangling from his fob as his only personal ornament. Shaking the water-drops from his low-crowned glazed hat, he said, "I must ask for a few minutes' shelter, comrades, or I shall be wetted to my skin before I get to Casterbridge."

"Make yourself at home, master," said the shepherd, perhaps a trifle less heartily than on the first occasion. Not that Fennel had the least tinge of niggardliness in his composition; but the room was far from large, spare chairs were not numerous, and damp companions were not altogether desirable at close quarters for the women and girls in their bright-coloured gowns.

However, the second comer, after taking off his greatcoat, and hanging his hat on a nail in one of the ceiling-beams as if he had been specially invited to put it there, advanced and sat down at the table. This had been pushed so closely into the chimney-corner, to give all

available room to the dancers, that its inner edge grazed the elbow of the man who had ensconced himself by the fire; and thus the two strangers were brought into close companionship. They nodded to each other by way of breaking the ice of unacquaintance, and the first stranger handed his neighbour the family mug—a huge vessel of brown ware, having its upper edge worn away like a threshold by the rub of whole generations of thirsty lips that had gone the way of all flesh, and bearing the following inscription burnt upon its rotund side in yellow letters:—

THERE IS NO FUN
UNTIL I CUM

The other man, nothing loth, raised the mug to his lips, and drank on, and on, and on—till a curious blueness overspread the countenance of the shepherd's wife, who had regarded with no little surprise the first stranger's free offer to the second of what did not belong to him to dispense.

"I knew it!" said the toper to the shepherd with much satisfaction. "When I walked up your garden before coming in, and saw the hives all of a row, I said to myself, 'Where there's bees there's honey, and where there's honey there's mead.' But mead of such a truly comfortable sort as this I really didn't expect to meet in my older days." He took yet another pull at the mug, till it assumed an ominous elevation.

"Glad you enjoy it!" said the shepherd warmly.

"It is goodish mead," assented Mrs. Fennel, with an absence of enthusiasm which seemed to say that it was possible to buy praise for one's cellar at too heavy a price. "It is trouble enough to make—and really I hardly think we shall make any more. For honey sells well, and we ourselves can make shift with a drop o' small mead and metheglin for common use from the comb-washings."

"O, but you'll never have the heart!" reproachfully cried the stranger in cinder-gray, after taking up the mug a third time and setting it down empty. "I love mead, when 'tis old like this, as I love to go to church o' Sundays, or to relieve the needy any day of the week."

"Ha, ha, ha!" said the man in the chimney-corner, who, in spite of the taciturnity induced by the pipe of tobacco, could not or would not refrain from this slight testimony to his comrade's humour.

Now the old mead of those days, brewed of the purest first-year or maiden honey, four pounds to the gallon—with its due complement of white of eggs, cinnamon, ginger, cloves, mace, rosemary, yeast, and processes of working, bottling, and cellaring—tasted remarkably strong; but it did not taste so strong as it actually was. Hence, presently, the stranger in cinder-gray at the table, moved by its creeping influence, unbuttoned his waistcoat, threw himself back in his chair, spread his legs, and made his presence felt in various ways.

"Well, well, as I say," he resumed, "I am going to Casterbridge, and to Casterbridge I must go. I should have been almost there by this time; but the rain drove me into your dwelling, and I'm not sorry for it."

"You don't live in Casterbridge?" said the shepherd.

"Not as yet; though I shortly mean to move there."

"Going to set up in trade, perhaps?"

"No, no," said the shepherd's wife. "It is easy to see that the gentleman is rich, and don't want to work at anything."

The cinder-gray stranger paused, as if to consider whether he would accept that definition of himself. He presently rejected it by answering, "Rich is not quite the word for me, dame. I do work, and I must work. And even if I only get to Casterbridge by midnight I must begin work there at eight tomorrow morning. Yes, het or wet, blow or snow, famine or sword, my day's work tomorrow must be done."

"Poor man! Then, in spite o' seeming, you be worse off than we?" replied the shepherd's wife.

" 'Tis the nature of my trade, men and maidens. 'Tis the nature of my trade more than my poverty. . . . But really and truly I must up and off, or I shan't get a lodging in the town." However, the speaker did not move, and directly added, "There's time for one more draught of friendship before I go; and I'd perform it at once if the mug were not dry."

"Here's a mug o' small," said Mrs. Fennel. "Small, we call it, though to be sure 'tis only the first wash o' the combs."

"No," said the stranger disdainfully. "I won't spoil your first kindness by partaking o' your second."

"Certainly not," broke in Fennel. "We don't increase and multiply every day, and I'll fill the mug again." He went away to the dark

place under the stairs where the barrel stood. The shepherdess followed him.

"Why should you do this?" she said reproachfully, as soon as they were alone. "He's emptied it once, though it held enough for ten people; and now he's not contented wi' the small, but must needs call for more o' the strong! And a stranger unbeknown to any of us. For my part, I don't like the look o' the man at all."

"But he's in the house, my honey; and 'tis a wet night, and a christening. Daze it, what's a cup of mead more or less? There'll be plenty more next bee-burning."

"Very well—this time, then," she answered, looking wistfully at the barrel. "But what is the man's calling, and where is he one of, that he should come in and join us like this?"

"I don't know. I'll ask him again."

The catastrophe of having the mug drained dry at one pull by the stranger in cinder-gray was effectually guarded against this time by Mrs. Fennel. She poured out his allowance in a small cup, keeping the large one at a discreet distance from him. When he had tossed off his portion the shepherd renewed his inquiry about the stranger's occupation.

The latter did not immediately reply, and the man in the chimney-corner, with sudden demonstrativeness, said, "Anybody may know my trade—I'm a wheelwright."

"A very good trade for these parts," said the shepherd.

"And anybody may know mine—if they've the sense to find it out," said the stranger in cinder-gray.

"You may generally tell what a man is by his claws," observed the hedge-carpenter, looking at his own hands. "My fingers be as full of thorns as an old pin-cushion is of pins."

The hands of the man in the chimney-corner instinctively sought the shade, and he gazed into the fire as he resumed his pipe. The man at the table took up the hedge-carpenter's remark, and added smartly, "True; but the oddity of my trade is that, instead of setting a mark upon me, it sets a mark upon my customers."

No observation being offered by anybody in elucidation of this enigma, the shepherd's wife once more called for a song. The same obstacles presented themselves as at the former time—one had no voice, another had forgotten the first verse. The stranger at the table, whose

soul had now risen to a good working temperature, relieved the difficulty by exclaiming that, to start the company, he would sing himself. Thrusting one thumb into the arm-hole of his waistcoat, he waved the other hand in the air, and, with an extemporizing gaze at the shining sheep-crooks above the mantelpiece, began:—

"O my trade it is the rarest one,
Simple shepherds all—
My trade is a sight to see;
For my customers I tie, and take them up on high,
And waft 'em to a far countree!"

The room was silent when he had finished the verse—with one exception, that of the man in the chimney-corner, who, at the singer's word, "Chorus!" joined him in a deep bass voice of musical relish—

"And waft 'em to a far countree!"

Oliver Giles, John Pitcher the dairyman, the parish-clerk, the engaged man of fifty, the row of young women against the wall, seemed lost in thought not of the gayest kind. The shepherd looked meditatively on the ground, the shepherdess gazed keenly at the singer, and with some suspicion; she was doubting whether this stranger were merely singing an old song from recollection, or was composing one there and then for the occasion. All were as perplexed at the obscure revelation as the guests at Belshazzar's Feast, except the man in the chimney-corner, who quietly said, "Second verse, stranger," and smoked on.

The singer thoroughly moistened himself from his lips inwards, and went on with the next stanza as requested:—

"My tools are but common ones,
Simple shepherds all—
My tools are no sight to see:
A little hempen string, and a post whereon to swing,
Are implements enough for me!"

Shepherd Fennel glanced round. There was no longer any doubt that the stranger was answering his question rhythmically. The guests one and all started back with suppressed exclamations. The young woman engaged to the man of fifty fainted half-way, and would have proceeded, but finding him wanting in alacrity for catching her she sat down trembling.

"O, he's the—!" whispered the people in the background, mentioning the name of an ominous public officer. "He's come to do it! 'Tis to be at Casterbridge jail tomorrow—the man for sheep-stealing—the poor clock-maker we heard of, who used to live away at Shottsford and had no work to do—Timothy Summers, whose family were a-starving, and so he went out of Shottsford by the high-road, and took a sheep in open daylight, defying the farmer and the farmer's wife and the farmer's lad, and every man jack among 'em. He" (and they nodded towards the stranger of the deadly trade) "is come from up the country to do it because there's not enough to do in his own country-town, and he's got the place here now our own county man's dead; he's going to live in the same cottage under the prison wall."

The stranger in cinder-gray took no notice of this whispered string of observations, but again wetted his lips. Seeing that his friend in the chimney-corner was the only one who reciprocated his joviality in any way, he held out his cup towards that appreciative comrade, who also held out his own. They clinked together, the eyes of the rest of the room hanging upon the singer's actions. He parted his lips for the third verse; but at that moment another knock was audible upon the door. This time the knock was faint and hesitating.

The company seemed scared; the shepherd looked with consternation towards the entrance, and it was with some effort that he resisted his alarmed wife's deprecatory glance, and uttered for the third time the welcoming words, "Walk in!"

The door was gently opened, and another man stood upon the mat. He, like those who had preceded him, was a stranger. This time it was a short, small personage, of fair complexion, and dressed in a decent suit of dark clothes.

"Can you tell me the way to—?" he began: when, gazing round the room to observe the nature of the company amongst whom he had fallen, his eyes lighted on the stranger in cinder-gray. It was just at the instant when the latter, who had thrown his mind into his song with such a will that he scarcely heeded the interruption, silenced all whispers and inquiries by bursting into his third verse:—

"Tomorrow is my working day,
Simple shepherds all—
Tomorrow is a working day for me:

For the farmer's sheep is slain, and the lad who did it ta'en,
And on his soul may God ha' merc-y!"

The stranger in the chimney-corner, waving cups with the singer so heartily that his mead splashed over on the hearth, repeated in his bass voice as before:—

"And on his soul may God ha' merc-y!"

All this time the third stranger had been standing in the doorway. Finding now that he did not come forward or go on speaking, the guests particularly regarded him. They noticed to their surprise that he stood before them the picture of abject terror—his knees trembling, his hand shaking so violently that the door-latch by which he supported himself rattled audibly: his white lips were parted, and his eyes fixed on the merry officer of justice in the middle of the room. A moment more and he had turned, closed the door, and fled.

"What a man can it be?" said the shepherd.

The rest, between the awfulness of their late discovery and the odd conduct of this third visitor, looked as if they knew not what to think, and said nothing. Instinctively they withdrew further and further from the grim gentleman in their midst, whom some of them seemed to take for the Prince of Darkness himself, till they formed a remote circle, an empty space of floor being left between them and him—

". . . circulus, cujus centrum diabolus."

The room was so silent—though there were more than twenty people in it—that nothing could be heard but the patter of the rain against the window-shutters, accompanied by the occasional hiss of a stray drop that fell down the chimney into the fire, and the steady puffing of the man in the corner, who had now resumed his pipe of long clay.

The stillness was unexpectedly broken. The distant sound of a gun reverberated through the air—apparently from the direction of the county-town.

"Be jiggered!" cried the stranger who had sung the song, jumping up.

"What does that mean?" asked several.

"A prisoner escaped from the jail—that's what it means."

All listened. The sound was repeated, and none of them spoke but the man in the chimney-corner, who said quietly, "I've often been told

that in this county they fire a gun at such times; but I never heard it till now."

"I wonder if it is *my* man?" murmured the personage in cinder-gray.

"Surely it is!" said the shepherd involuntarily. "And surely we've zeed him! That little man who looked in at the door by now, and quivered like a leaf when he zeed ye and heard your song!"

"His teeth chattered, and the breath went out of his body," said the dairyman.

"And his heart seemed to sink within him like a stone," said Oliver Giles.

"And he bolted as if he'd been shot at," said the hedge-carpenter.

"True—his teeth chattered, and his heart seemed to sink; and he bolted as if he'd been shot at," slowly summed up the man in the chimney-corner.

"I didn't notice it," remarked the hangman.

"We were all a-wondering what made him run off in such a fright," faltered one of the women against the wall, "and now 'tis explained!"

The firing of the alarm-gun went on at intervals, low and sullenly, and their suspicions became a certainty. The sinister gentleman in cinder-gray roused himself. "Is there a constable here?" he asked, in thick tones. "If so, let him step forward."

The engaged man of fifty stepped quavering out from the wall, his betrothed beginning to sob on the back of the chair.

"You are a sworn constable?"

"I be, sir."

"Then pursue the criminal at once, with assistance, and bring him back here. He can't have gone far."

"I will, sir, I will—when I've got my staff. I'll go home and get it, and come sharp here, and start in a body."

"Staff!—never mind your staff; the man'll be gone!"

"But I can't do nothing without my staff—can I, William, and John, and Charles Jake? No; for there's the king's royal crown a-painted on en in yaller and gold, and the lion and the unicorn, so as when I raise en up and hit my prisoner, 'tis made a lawful blow thereby. I wouldn't 'tempt to take up a man without my staff—no, not I. If I hadn't the law to gie me courage, why, instead o' my taking up him he might take up me!"

"Now, I'm a king's man myself, and can give you authority enough

for this," said the formidable officer in gray. "Now then, all of ye, be ready. Have ye any lanterns?"

"Yes—have ye any lanterns?—I demand it!" said the constable.

"And the rest of you able-bodied—"

"Able-bodied men—yes—the rest of ye!" said the constable.

"Have you some good stout staves and pitchforks—"

"Staves and pitchforks—in the name o' the law! And take 'em in yer hands and go in quest, and do as we in authority tell ye!"

Thus aroused, the men prepared to give chase. The evidence was, indeed, though circumstantial, so convincing, that but little argument was needed to show the shepherd's guests that after what they had seen it would look very much like connivance if they did not instantly pursue the unhappy third stranger, who could not as yet have gone more than a few hundred yards over such uneven country.

A shepherd is always well provided with lanterns; and lighting these hastily, and with hurdle-staves in their hands, they poured out of the door, taking a direction along the crest of the hill, away from the town, the rain having fortunately a little abated.

Disturbed by the noise, or possibly by unpleasant dreams of her baptism, the child who had been christened began to cry heart-brokenly in the room overhead. These notes of grief came down through the chinks of the floor to the ears of the women below, who jumped up one by one, and seemed glad of the excuse to ascend and comfort the baby, for the incidents of the last half-hour greatly oppressed them. Thus in the space of two or three minutes the room on the ground-floor was deserted quite.

But it was not for long. Hardly had the sound of footsteps died away when a man returned round the corner of the house from the direction the pursuers had taken. Peeping in at the door, and seeing nobody there, he entered leisurely. It was the stranger of the chimney-corner, who had gone out with the rest. The motive of his return was shown by his helping himself to a cut piece of skimmer-cake that lay on a ledge beside where he had sat, and which he had apparently forgotten to take with him. He also poured out half a cup more mead from the quantity that remained, ravenously eating and drinking these as he stood. He had not finished when another figure came in just as quietly—his friend in cinder-gray.

"O—you here?" said the latter, smiling. "I thought you had gone

to help in the capture." And this speaker also revealed the object of his return by looking solicitously round for the fascinating mug of old mead.

"And I thought you had gone," said the other, continuing his skimmer-cake with some effort.

"Well, on second thoughts, I felt there were enough without me," said the first confidentially, "and such a night as it is, too. Besides, 'tis the business o' the Government to take care of its criminals—not mine."

"True; so it is. And I felt as you did, that there were enough without me."

"I don't want to break my limbs running over the humps and hollows of this wild country."

"Nor I neither, between you and me."

"These shepherd-people are used to it—simple-minded souls, you know, stirred up to anything in a moment. They'll have him ready for me before the morning, and no trouble to me at all."

"They'll have him, and we shall have saved ourselves all labour in the matter."

"True, true. Well, my way is to Casterbridge; and 'tis as much as my legs will do to take me that far. Going the same way?"

"No, I am sorry to say! I have to get home over there" (he nodded indefinitely to the right), "and I feel as you do, that it is quite enough for my legs to do before bedtime."

The other had by this time finished the mead in the mug, after which, shaking hands heartily at the door, and wishing each other well, they went their several ways.

In the meantime the company of pursuers had reached the end of the hog's-back elevation which dominated this part of the down. They had decided on no particular plan of action; and, finding that the man of the baleful trade was no longer in their company, they seemed quite unable to form any such plan now. They descended in all directions down the hill, and straightway several of the party fell into the snare set by Nature for all misguided midnight ramblers over this part of the cretaceous formation. The "lanchets," or flint slopes, which belted the escarpment at intervals of a dozen yards, took the less cautious ones unawares, and losing their footing on the rubbly steep they slid sharply

downwards, the lanterns rolling from their hands to the bottom, and there lying on their sides till the horn was scorched through.

When they had again gathered themselves together, the shepherd, as the man who knew the country best, took the lead, and guided them round these treacherous inclines. The lanterns, which seemed rather to dazzle their eyes and warn the fugitive than to assist them in the exploration, were extinguished, due silence was observed; and in this more rational order they plunged into the vale. It was a grassy, briery, moist defile, affording some shelter to any person who had sought it; but the party perambulated it in vain, and ascended on the other side. Here they wandered apart, and after an interval closed together again to report progress. At the second time of closing in they found themselves near a lonely ash, the single tree on this part of the coomb, probably sown there by a passing bird some fifty years before. And here, standing a little to one side of the trunk, as motionless as the trunk itself, appeared the man they were in quest of, his outline being well defined against the sky beyond. The band noiselessly drew up and faced him.

"Your money or your life!" said the constable sternly to the still figure.

"No, no," whispered John Pitcher. " 'Tisn't our side ought to say that. That's the doctrine of vagabonds like him, and we be on the side of the law."

"Well, well," replied the constable impatiently; "I must say something, mustn't I? and if you had all the weight o' this undertaking upon your mind, perhaps you'd say the wrong thing too!—Prisoner at the bar, surrender, in the name of the Father—the Crown, I mane!"

The man under the tree seemed now to notice them for the first time, and, giving them no opportunity whatever for exhibiting their courage, he strolled slowly towards them. He was, indeed, the little man, the third stranger; but his trepidation had in a great measure gone.

"Well, travelers," he said, "did I hear ye speak to me?"

"You did: you've got to come and be our prisoner at once!" said the constable. "We arrest 'ee on the charge of not biding in Casterbridge jail in a decent proper manner to be hung tomorrow morning. Neighbours, do your duty, and seize the culpet!"

On hearing the charge, the man seemed enlightened, and, saying not another word, resigned himself with preternatural civility to the search-

party, who, with their staves in their hands, surrounded him on all sides, and marched him back towards the shepherd's cottage.

It was eleven o'clock by the time they arrived. The light shining from the open door, a sound of men's voices within, proclaimed to them as they approached the house that some new events had arisen in their absence. On entering they discovered the shepherd's living room to be invaded by two officers from Casterbridge jail, and a well-known magistrate who lived at the nearest county-seat, intelligence of the escape having become generally circulated.

"Gentlemen," said the constable, "I have brought back your man—not without risk and danger; but everyone must do his duty! He is inside this circle of able-bodied persons, who have lent me useful aid, considering their ignorance of Crown work. Men, bring forward your prisoner!" And the third stranger was led to the light.

"Who is this?" said one of the officials.

"The man," said the constable.

"Certainly not," said the turnkey; and the first corroborated his statement.

"But how can it be otherwise?" asked the constable. "Or why was he so terrified at sight o' the singing instrument of the law who sat there?" Here he related the strange behaviour of the third stranger on entering the house during the hangman's song.

"Can't understand it," said the officer coolly. "All I know is that it is not the condemned man. He's quite a different character from this one; a gauntish fellow, with dark hair and eyes, rather good-looking and with a musical bass voice that if you heard it once you'd never mistake as long as you lived."

"Why, souls—'twas the man in the chimney-corner!"

"Hey—what?" said the magistrate, coming forward after inquiring particulars from the shepherd in the background. "Haven't you got the man after all?"

"Well, sir," said the constable, "he's the man we were in search of, that's true; and yet he's not the man we were in search of. For the man we were in search of was not the man we wanted, sir, if you understand my every-day way; for 'twas the man in the chimney-corner!"

"A pretty kettle of fish altogether!" said the magistrate. "You had better start for the other man at once."

The prisoner now spoke for the first time. The mention of the man

in the chimney-corner seemed to have moved him as nothing else could do. "Sir," he said, stepping forward to the magistrate, "take no more trouble about me. The time is come when I may as well speak. I have done nothing; my crime is that the condemned man is my brother. Early this afternoon I left home at Shottsford to tramp it all the way to Casterbridge jail to bid him farewell, I was benighted, and called here to rest and ask the way. When I opened the door I saw before me the very man, my brother, that I thought to see in the condemned cell at Casterbridge. He was in this chimney-corner; and jammed close to him, so that he could not have got out if he had tried, was the executioner who'd come to take his life, singing a song about it and not knowing that it was his victim who was close by, joining in to save appearances. My brother looked a glance of agony at me, and I knew he meant, 'Don't reveal what you see; my life depends on it.' I was so terror-struck that I could hardly stand, and, not knowing what I did, I turned and hurried away."

The narrator's manner and tone had the stamp of truth, and his story made a great impression on all around. "And do you know where your brother is at the present time?" asked the magistrate.

"I do not. I have never seen him since I closed this door."

"I can testify to that, for we've been between ye ever since," said the constable.

"Where does he think to fly to?—what is his occupation?"

"He's a watch-and-clock-maker, sir."

"'A said 'a was a wheelwright—a wicked rogue," said the constable.

"The wheels of clocks and watches he meant, no doubt," said Shepherd Fennel. "I thought his hands were palish for's trade."

"Well, it appears to me that nothing can be gained by retaining this poor man in custody," said the magistrate; "your business lies with the other, unquestionably."

And so the little man was released offhand; but he looked nothing the less sad on that account, it being beyond the power of the magistrate or constable to raze out the written troubles in his brain, for they concerned another whom he regarded with more solicitude than himself. When this was done, and the man had gone his way, the night was found to be so far advanced that it was deemed useless to renew the search before the next morning.

Next day, accordingly, the quest for the clever sheep-stealer became

general and keen, to all appearance at least. But the intended punishment was cruelly disproportioned to the transgression, and the sympathy of a great many country-folk in that district was strongly on the side of the fugitive. Moreover, his marvelous coolness and daring in hob-and-nobbing with the hangman, under the unprecedented circumstances of the shepherd's party, won their admiration. So that it may be questioned if all those who ostensibly made themselves so busy in exploring woods and fields and lanes were quite so thorough when it came to the private examination of their own lofts and outhouses. Stories were afloat of a mysterious figure being occasionally seen in some old overgrown trackway or other, remote from turnpike roads; but when a search was instituted in any of these suspected quarters nobody was found. Thus the days and weeks passed without tidings.

In brief, the bass-voiced man of the chimney-corner was never recaptured. Some said that he went across the sea, others that he did not, but buried himself in the depths of a populous city. At any rate, the gentleman in cinder-gray never did his morning's work at Casterbridge, nor met anywhere at all, for business purposes, the genial comrade with whom he had passed an hour of relaxation in the lonely house on the coomb.

The grass has long been green on the graves of Shepherd Fennel and his frugal wife; the guests who made up the christening party have mainly followed their entertainers to the tomb; the baby in whose honour they all had met is a matron in the sere and yellow leaf. But the arrival of the three strangers at the shepherd's that night, and the details connected therewith, is a story as well known as ever in the country about Higher Crowstairs.

The Roll-call of the Reef

BY ARTHUR QUILLER-COUCH

"YES, sir," said my host, the quarryman, reaching down the relics from their hook in the wall over the chimney-piece; "they've hung here all my time, and most of my father's. The women won't touch 'em; they're afraid of the story. So here they'll dangle, and gather dust and smoke, till another tenant comes and tosses 'em out o' doors for rubbish. Whew! 'tis coarse weather, surely."

He went to the door, opened it, and stood studying the gale that beat upon his cottage-front, straight from the Manacle Reef. The rain drove past him into the kitchen, aslant like threads of gold silk in the shine of the wreck-wood fire. Meanwhile, by the same firelight, I examined the relics on my knee. The metal of each was tarnished out of knowledge. But the trumpet was evidently an old cavalry trumpet, and the threads of its parti-colored sling, though fretted and dusty, still hung together. Around the sidedrum, beneath its cracked brown varnish, I could hardly trace a royal coat-of-arms and a legend running, "Per Mare Per Terram"—the motto of the marines. Its parchment, though black and scented with wood-smoke, was limp and mildewed; and I began to tighten up the straps—under which the drumsticks had been loosely thrust—with the idle purpose of trying if some music might be got out of the old drum yet.

But as I turned it on my knee, I found the drum attached to the trumpet-sling by a curious barrel-shaped padlock, and paused to examine this. The body of the lock was composed of half a dozen brass rings, set accurately edge to edge; and, rubbing the brass with my thumb, I saw that each of the six had a series of letters engraved around it.

I knew the trick of it, I thought. Here was one of those word padlocks, once so common; only to be opened by getting the rings to spell a certain word, which the dealer confides to you.

My host shut and barred the door, and came back to the hearth.

" 'Twas just such a wind—east by south—that brought in what you've got between your hands. Back in the year 'nine, it was; my father has told me the tale a score o' times. You're twisting round the rings, I see. But you'll never guess the word. Parson Kendall, he made the word, and he locked down a couple o' ghosts in their graves with it; and when his time came he went to his own grave and took the word with him."

"Whose ghosts, Matthew?"

"You want the story, I see, sir. My father could tell it better than I can. He was a young man in the year 'nine, unmarried at the time, and living in this very cottage, just as I be. That's how he came to get mixed up with the tale."

He took a chair, lighted a short pipe, and went on, with his eyes fixed on the dancing violet flames:

"Yes, he'd ha' been about thirty year old in January, eighteen 'nine. The storm got up in the night o' the twenty-first o' that month. My father was dressed and out long before daylight; he never was one to bide in bed, let be that the gale by this time was pretty near lifting the thatch over his head. Besides which, he'd fenced a small 'taty-patch that winter, down by Lowland Point, and he wanted to see if it stood the night's work. He took the path across Gunner's Meadow—where they buried most of the bodies afterward. The wind was right in his teeth at the time, and once on the way (he's told me this often) a great strip of oarweed came flying through the darkness and fetched him a slap on the cheek like a cold hand. But he made shift pretty well till he got to Lowland, and then had to drop upon hands and knees and crawl, digging his fingers every now and then into the shingle to hold on, for he declared to me that the stones, some of them as big as a man's head, kept rolling and driving past till it seemed the whole foreshore was moving westward under him. The fence was gone, of course; not a stick left to show where it stood; so that, when first he came to the place, he thought he must have missed his bearings. My father, sir, was a very religious man; and if he reckoned the end of the world was at hand—there in the great wind and night, among the moving stones—you may believe he was certain of it when he heard a gun fired, and, with the same, saw a flame shoot up out of the darkness to windward, making a sudden fierce light in all the place about. All he could find to think or say was, 'The Second Coming! The Second

Coming! The Bridegroom cometh, and the wicked He will toss like a ball into a large country'; and being already upon his knees, he just bowed his head and 'bided, saying this over and over.

"But by'm by, between two squalls, he made bold to lift his head and look, and then by the light—a bluish color 'twas—he saw all the coast clear away to Manacle Point, and off the Manacles in the thick of the weather, a sloop-of-war with topgallants housed, driving stern foremost toward the reef. It was she, of course, that was burning the flare. My father could see the white streak and the ports of her quite plain as she rose to it, a little outside the breakers, and he guessed easy enough that her captain had just managed to wear ship and was trying to force her nose to the sea with the help of her small bower anchor and the scrap or two of canvas that hadn't yet been blown out of her. But while he looked, she fell off, giving her broadside to it foot by foot, and drifting back on the breakers around Carn Du and the Varses. The rocks lie so thick thereabout that 'twas a toss-up which she struck first; at any rate, my father couldn't tell at the time, for just then the flare died down and went out.

"Well, sir, he turned then in the dark and started back for Coverack to cry the dismal tidings—though well knowing ship and crew to be past any hope, and as he turned the wind lifted him and tossed him forward 'like a ball,' as he'd been saying, and homeward along the foreshore. As you know, 'tis ugly work, even by daylight, picking your way among the stones there, and my father was prettily knocked about at first in the dark. But by this 'twas nearer seven than six o'clock, and the day spreading. By the time he reached North Corner, a man could see to read print; hows'ever, he looked neither out to sea nor toward Coverack, but headed straight for the first cottage—the same that stands above North Corner today. A man named Billy Ede lived there then, and when my father burst into the kitchen bawling, 'Wreck! wreck!' he saw Billy Ede's wife, Ann, standing there in her clogs with a shawl over her head, and her clothes wringing wet.

" 'Save the chap!' says Billy Ede's wife, Ann. 'What d'ee mean by crying stale fish at that rate?'

" 'But 'tis a wreck, I tell 'ee.'

" 'I've a-zeed 'n, too; and so has everyone with an eye in his head.'

"And with that she pointed straight over my father's shoulder, and he turned; and there, close under Dolor Point, at the end of Coverack

town, he saw another wreck washing, and the point black with people, like emmets, running to and fro in the morning light. While he stood staring at her, he heard a trumpet sounded on board, the notes coming in little jerks, like a bird rising against the wind; but faintly, of course, because of the distance and the gale blowing—though this had dropped a little.

" 'She's a transport,' said Billy Ede's wife, Ann, 'and full of horse-soldiers, fine long men. When she struck they must ha' pitched the horses over first to lighten the ship, for a score of dead horses had washed in afore I left, half an hour back. An' three or four soldiers, too —fine long corpses in white breeches and jackets of blue and gold. I held the lantern to one. Such a straight young man!'

"My father asked her about the trumpeting.

" 'That's the queerest bit of all. She was burnin' a light when me an' my man joined the crowd down there. All her masts had gone; whether they carried away, or were cut away to ease her, I don't rightly know. Her keelson was broke under her and her bottom sagged and stove, and she had just settled down like a sitting hen—just the leastest list to starboard; but a man could stand there easy. They had rigged up ropes across her, from bulwark to bulwark, an' beside these the men were mustered, holding on like grim death whenever the sea made a clean breach over them, an' standing up like heroes as soon as it passed. The captain an' the officers were clinging to the rail of the quarterdeck, all in their golden uniforms, waiting for the end as if 'twas King George they expected. There was no way to help, for she lay right beyond cast of line, though our folk tried it fifty times. And beside them clung a trumpeter, a whacking big man, an' between the heavy seas he would lift his trumpet with one hand, and blow a call; and every time he blew the men gave a cheer. There [she says]—hark 'ee now—there he goes agen! But you won't hear no cheering any more, for few are left to cheer, and their voices weak. Bitter cold the wind is, and I reckon it numbs their grip o' the ropes, for they were dropping off fast with every sea when my man sent me home to get his breakfast. Another wreck, you say? Well, there's no hope for the tender dears, if 'tis the Manacles. You'd better run down and help yonder; though 'tis little help any man can give. Not one came in alive while I was there. The tide's flowing, an' she won't hold together another hour, they say.'

"Well, sure enough, the end was coming fast when my father got down to the point. Six men had been cast up alive, or just breathing —a seaman and five troopers. The seaman was the only one that had breath to speak; and while they were carrying him into the town, the word went round that the ship's name was the 'Despatch,' transport, homeward-bound from Corunna, with a detachment of the Seventh Hussars, that had been fighting out there with Sir John Moore. The seas had rolled her further over by this time, and given her decks a pretty sharp slope; but a dozen men still held on, seven by the ropes near the ship's waist, a couple near the break of the poop, and three on the quarterdeck. Of these three my father made out one to be the skipper; close by him clung an officer in full regimentals—his name, they heard after, was Captain Duncanfield; and last came the tall trumpeter; and if you'll believe me, the fellow was making shift there, at the very last, to blow, 'God Save the King.' What's more, he got to 'Send us victorious,' before an extra big sea came bursting across and washed them off the deck—every man but one of the pair beneath the poop—and he dropped his hold before the next wave; being stunned, I reckon. The others went out of sight at once, but the trumpeter—being, as I said, a powerful man as well as a tough swimmer—rose like a duck, rode out a couple of breakers, and came in on the crest of the third. The folks looked to see him broke like an egg at their very feet; but when the smother cleared, there he was, lying face downward on a ledge below them; and one of the men that happened to have a rope round him—I forget the fellow's name, if I ever heard it—jumped down and grabbed him by the ankle as he began to slip back. Before the next big sea, the pair were hauled high enough to be out of harm, and another heave brought them up to grass. Quick work, but master trumpeter wasn't quite dead; nothing worse than a cracked head and three staved ribs. In twenty minutes or so they had him in bed, with the doctor to tend him.

"Now was the time—nothing being left alive upon the transport—for my father to tell of the sloop he'd seen driving upon the Manacles. And when he got a hearing, though the most were set upon salvage, and believed a wreck in the hand, so to say, to be worth half a dozen they couldn't see, a good few volunteered to start off with him and have a look. They crossed Lowland Point; no ship to be seen on the Manacles nor anywhere upon the sea. One or two was for calling my father a

liar. 'Wait till we come to Dean Point,' said he. Sure enough, on the far side of Dean Point they found the sloop's mainmast washing about with half a dozen men lashed to it, men in red jackets, every mother's son drowned and staring; and a little further on, just under the Dean, three or four bodies cast up on the shore, one of them a small drummer-boy, side-drum and all; and near by part of a ship's gig, with 'H.M.S. Primrose' cut on the stern-board. From this point on the shore was littered thick with wreckage and dead bodies—the most of them marines in uniform—and in Godrevy Cove, in particular, a heap of furniture from the captain's cabin, and among it a water-tight box, not much damaged, and full of papers, by which, when it came to be examined, next day, the wreck was easily made out to be the 'Primrose,' of eighteen guns, outward bound from Portsmouth, with a fleet of transports for the Spanish war—thirty sail, I've heard, but I've never heard what became of them. Being handled by merchant skippers, no doubt they rode out the gale, and reached the Tagus safe and sound. Not but what the captain of the 'Primrose'—Mein was his name—did quite right to try and club-haul his vessel when he found himself under the land; only he never ought to have got there, if he took proper soundings. But it's easy talking.

"The 'Primrose,' sir, was a handsome vessel—for her size one of the handsomest in the King's service—and newly fitted out at Plymouth Dock. So the boys had brave pickings from her in the way of brass-work, ship's instruments, and the like, let alone some barrels of stores not much spoiled. They loaded themselves with as much as they could carry, and started for home, meaning to make a second journey before the preventive men got wind of their doings, and came to spoil the fun. 'Hullo!' says my father, and dropped his gear, 'I do believe there's a leg moving?' and running fore, he stooped over the small drummer-boy that I told you about. The poor little chap was lying there, with his face a mass of bruises, and his eyes closed; but he had shifted one leg an inch or two, and was still breathing. So my father pulled out a knife, and cut him free from his drum—that was lashed on to him with a double turn of Manila rope—and took him up and carried him along here to this very room that we're sitting in. He lost a good deal by this; for when he went back to fetch the bundle he'd dropped, the preventive men had got hold of it, and were thick as thieves along the foreshore; so that 'twas only by paying one or two to look the other

way that he picked up anything worth carrying off: which you'll allow to be hard, seeing that he was the first man to give news of the wreck.

"Well, the inquiry was held, of course, and my father gave evidence, and for the rest they had to trust to the sloop's papers, for not a soul was saved besides the drummer-boy, and he was raving in a fever, brought on by the cold and the fright. And the seaman and the five troopers gave evidence about the loss of the 'Despatch.' The tall trumpeter, too, whose ribs were healing, came forward and kissed the book; but somehow his head had been hurt in coming ashore, and he talked foolish-like, and 'twas easy seen he would never be a proper man again. The others were taken up to Plymouth, and so went their ways; but the trumpeter stayed on in Coverack; and King George, finding he was fit for nothing, sent him down a trifle of a pension after a while —enough to keep him in board and lodging, with a bit of tobacco over.

"Now the first time that this man—William Tallifer he called himself—met with the drummer-boy, was about a fortnight after the little chap had bettered enough to be allowed a short walk out of doors, which he took, if you please, in full regimentals. There never was a soldier so proud of his dress. His own suit had shrunk a brave bit with the salt water; but into ordinary frock an' corduroys he declared he would not get, not if he had to go naked the rest of his life; so my father—being a good-natured man, and handy with the needle—turned to and repaired damages with a piece or two of scarlet cloth cut from the jacket of one of the drowned Marines. Well, the poor little chap chanced to be standing, in this rig-out, down by the gate of Gunner's Meadow, where they had buried two score and over of his comrades. The morning was a fine one, early in March month; and along came the cracked trumpeter, likewise taking a stroll.

"'Hullo!' says he; 'good mornin'! And what might you be doin' here?'

"'I was a-wishin',' says the boy, 'I had a pair o' drumsticks. Our lads were buried yonder without so much as a drum tapped or a musket fired; and that's not Christian burial for British soldiers.'

"'Phut!' says the trumpeter, and spat on the ground; 'a parcel of Marines!'

"The boy eyed him a second or so, and answered up: 'If I'd a tav of turf handy, I'd bung it at your mouth, you greasy cavalryman, and

learn you to speak respectful of your betters. The Marines are the handiest body o' men in the service.'

"The trumpeter looked down on him from the height of six-foot two, and asked: 'Did they die well?'

" 'They died very well. There was a lot of running to and fro at first, and some of the men began to cry, and a few to strip off their clothes. But when the ship fell off for the last time, Captain Mein turned and said something to Major Griffiths, the commanding officer on board, and the Major called out to me to beat to quarters. It might have been for a wedding, he sang it out so cheerful. We'd had word already that 'twas to be parade order; and the men fell in as trim and decent as if they were going to church. One or two even tried to shave at the last moment. The Major wore his medals. One of the seamen, seeing I had work to keep the drum steady—the sling being a bit loose for me, and the wind what you remember—lashed it tight with a piece of rope; and that saved my life afterward, a drum being as good as a cork until it's stove. I kept beating away until every man was on deck; and then the Major formed them up and told them to die like British soldiers, and the chaplain was in the middle of a prayer when she struck. In ten minutes she was gone. That was how they died, cavalryman.'

" 'And that was very well done, drummer of the Marines. What's your name?'

" 'John Christian.'

" 'Mine's William George Tallifer, trumpeter, of the Seventh Light Dragoons—the Queen's Own. I played "God Save the King" while our men were drowning. Captain Duncanfield told me to sound a call or two, to put them in heart; but that matter of "God Save the King" was a notion of my own. I won't say anything to hurt the feelings of a Marine, even if he's not much over five-foot tall; but the Queen's Own Hussars is a tearin' fine regiment. As between horse and foot, 'tis a question o' which gets a chance. All the way from Sahagun to Corunna 'twas we that took and gave the knocks—at Mayorga and Rueda, and Bennyventy.'—The reason, sir, I can speak the names so pat, is that my father learnt 'em by heart afterward from the trumpeter, who was always talking about Mayorga and Rueda and Bennyventy.—'We made the rear-guard, under General Paget; and drove the French every time; and all the infantry did was to sit about in wine-shops till we whipped

'em out, an' steal an' straggle an' play the tom-fool in general. And when it came to a stand-up fight at Corunna, 'twas we that had to stay seasick aboard the transports, an' watch the infantry in the thick o' the caper. Very well they behaved, too—specially the Fourth Regiment, an' the Forty-Second Highlanders, an' the Dirty Half-Hundred. Oh, ay; they're decent regiments, all three. But the Queen's Own Hussars is a tearin' fine regiment. So you played on your drum when the ship was goin' down? Drummer John Christian, I'll have to get you a new pair of sticks.'

"The very next day the trumpeter marched into Helston, and got a carpenter there to turn him a pair of box-wood drumsticks for the boy. And this was the beginning of one of the most curious friendships you ever heard tell of. Nothing delighted the pair more than to borrow a boat off my father and pull out to the rocks where the 'Primrose' and the 'Despatch' had struck and sunk; and on still days 'twas pretty to hear them out there off the Manacles, the drummer playing his tattoo —for they always took their music with them—and the trumpeter practising calls, and making his trumpet speak like an angel. But if the weather turned roughish, they'd be walking together and talking; leastwise the youngster listened while the other discoursed about Sir John's campaign in Spain and Portugal, telling how each little skirmish befell; and of Sir John himself, and General Baird, and General Paget, and Colonel Vivian, his own commanding officer, and what kind of men they were; and of the last bloody stand-up at Corunna, and so forth, as if neither could have enough.

"But all this had to come to an end in the late summer, for the boy, John Christian, being now well and strong again, must go up to Plymouth to report himself. 'Twas his own wish (for I believe King George had forgotten all about him), but his friend wouldn't hold him back. As for the trumpeter, my father had made an arrangement to take him on as lodger, as soon as the boy left; and on the morning fixed for the start, he was up at the door here by five o'clock, with his trumpet slung by his side, and all the rest of his belongings in a small valise. A Monday morning it was, and after breakfast he had fixed to walk with the boy some way on the road toward Helston, where the coach started. My father left them at breakfast together, and went out to meat the pig, and do a few odd morning jobs of that sort. When he came back, the boy was still at table, and the trumpeter sat with

the rings in his hands, hitched together just as they be at this moment.

"'Look at this,' he says to my father, showing him the lock. 'I picked it up off a starving brass-worker in Lisbon, and it is not one of your common locks that one word of six letters will open at any time. There's janius in this lock; for you've only to make the rings spell any six-letter word you please and snap down the lock upon that, and never a soul can open it—not the maker, even—until somebody comes along that knows the word you snapped it on. Now Johnny here's goin', and he leaves his drum behind him; for, though he can make pretty music on it, the parchment sags in wet weather, by reason of the sea-water getting at it; an' if he carries it to Plymouth, they'll only condemn it and give him another. And, as for me, I shan't have the heart to put lip to the trumpet any more when Johnny's gone. So we've chosen a word together, and locked 'em together upon that; and, by your leave, I'll hang 'em here together on the hook over your fireplace. Maybe Johnny'll come back; maybe not. Maybe, if he comes, I'll be dead an' gone, and he'll take 'em apart an' try their music for old sake's sake. But if he never comes, nobody can separate 'em; for nobody besides knows the word. And if you marry and have sons, you can tell 'em that here are tied together the souls of Johnny Christian, drummer of the Marines, and William George Tallifer, once trumpeter of the Queen's Own Hussars. Amen.'

"With that he hung the two instruments 'pon the hook there; and the boy stood up and thanked my father and shook hands; and the pair went out of the door, toward Helston.

"Somewhere on the road they took leave of one another; but nobody saw the parting, nor heard what was said between them. About three in the afternoon the trumpeter came walking back over the hill; and by the time my father came home from the fishing, the cottage was tidied up, and the tea ready, and the whole place shining like a new pin. From that time for five years he lodged here with my father, looking after the house and tilling the garden. And all the while he was steadily failing; the hurt in his head spreading, in a manner, to his limbs. My father watched the feebleness growing on him, but said nothing. And from first to last neither spake a word about the drummer, John Christian; nor did any letter reach them, nor word of his doings.

"The rest of the tale you're free to believe, sir, or not, as you please. It stands upon my father's words, and he always declared he was ready

to kiss the Book upon it, before judge and jury. He said, too, that he never had the wit to make up such a yarn; and he defied anyone to explain about the lock, in particular, by any other tale. But you shall judge for yourself.

"My father said that about three o'clock in the morning, April fourteenth, of the year 'fourteen, he and William Tallifer were sitting here, just as you and I, sir, are sitting now. My father had put on his clothes a few minutes before, and was mending his spiller by the light of the horn lantern, meaning to set off before daylight to haul the trammel. The trumpeter hadn't been to bed at all. Toward the last he mostly spent his nights (and his days, too) dozing in the elbow-chair where you sit at this minute. He was dozing then (my father said) with his chin dropped forward on his chest, when a knock sounded upon the door, and the door opened, and in walked an upright young man in scarlet regimentals.

"He had grown a brave bit, and his face the color of wood-ashes; but it was the drummer, John Christian. Only his uniform was different from the one he used to wear, and the figures '38' shone in brass upon his collar.

"The drummer walked past my father as if he never saw him, and stood by the elbow-chair and said:

" 'Trumpeter, trumpeter, are you one with me?'

"And the trumpeter just lifted the lids of his eyes, and answered: 'How should I not be one with you, drummer Johnny—Johnny boy? If you come, I count; if you march, I mark time; until the discharge comes.'

" 'The discharge has come tonight,' said the drummer; 'and the word is Corunna no longer.' And stepping to the chimney-place, he unhooked the drum and trumpet, and began to twist the brass rings of the lock, spelling the word aloud, so—'C-O-R-U-N-A.' When he had fixed the last letter, the padlock opened in his hand.

" 'Did you know, trumpeter, that, when I came to Plymouth, they put me into a line regiment?'

" 'The 38th is a good regiment,' answered the old Hussar, still in his dull voice; 'I went back with them from Sahagun to Corunna. At Corunna they stood in General Fraser's division, on the right. They behaved well.'

" 'But I'd fain see the Marines again,' says the drummer, handing

him the trumpet; 'and you, you shall call once more for the Queen's Own. Matthew,' he says, suddenly, turning on my father—and when he turned, my father saw for the first time that his scarlet jacket had a round hole by the breast-bone, and that the blood was welling there —'Matthew, we shall want your boat.'

"Then my father rose on his legs like a man in a dream, while they two slung on, the one his drum, and t'other his trumpet. He took the lantern and went quaking before them down to the shore, and they breathed heavily behind him; and they stepped into his boat, and my father pushed off.

" 'Row you first for Dolor Point,' says the drummer. So my father rowed them past the white houses of Coverack to Dolor Point, and there, at a word, lay on his oars. And the trumpeter, William Tallifer, put his trumpet to his mouth and sounded the reveille. The music of it was like rivers running.

" 'They will follow,' said the drummer. 'Matthew, pull you now for the Manacles.'

"So my father pulled for the Manacles, and came to an easy close outside Carn Du. And the drummer took his sticks and beat a tattoo, there by the edge of the reef; and the music of it was like a rolling chariot.

" 'That will do,' says he, breaking off; 'they will follow. Pull now for the shore under Gunner's Meadow.'

"Then my father pulled for the shore and ran his boat in under Gunner's Meadow. And they stepped out, all three, and walked up to the meadow. By the gate the drummer halted, and began his tattoo again, looking out toward the darkness over the sea.

"And while the drum beat, and my father held his breath, there came up out of the sea and the darkness a troop of many men, horse and foot, and formed up among the graves; and others rose out of the graves and formed up—drowned Marines with bleached faces, and pale Hussars, riding their horses, all lean and shadowy. There was no clatter of hoofs or accoutrements, my father said, but a soft sound all the while like the beating of a bird's wing; and a black shadow lay like a pool about the feet of all. The drummer stood upon a little knoll just inside the gate, and beside him the tall trumpeter, with hand on hip, watching them gather; and behind them both my father, clinging to

the gate. When no more came, the drummer stopped playing, and said, 'Call the roll.'

"Then the trumpeter stepped toward the end man of the rank and called, 'Troop Sergeant-Major Thomas Irons,' and the man answered in a thin voice, 'Here.'

" 'Troop Sergeant-Major Thomas Irons, how is it with you?'

"The man answered, 'How should it be with me? When I was young, I betrayed a girl; and when I was grown, I betrayed a friend, and for these I must pay. But I died as a man ought. God save the King!'

"The trumpeter called to the next man, 'Trooper Henry Buckingham,' and the next man answered, 'Here.'

" 'Trooper Henry Buckingham, how is it with you?'

" 'How should it be with me? I was a drunkard, and I stole, and in Lugo, in a wine-shop, I killed a man. But I died as a man should. God save the King!'

"So the trumpeter went down the line; and when he had finished, the drummer took it up, hailing the dead Marines in their order. Each man answered to his name, and each man ended with 'God save the King!' When all were hailed, the drummer stepped back to his mound, and called:

" 'It is well. You are content, and we are content to join you. Wait, now, a little while.'

"With this he turned and ordered my father to pick up the lantern, and lead the way back. As my father picked it up, he heard the ranks of the dead men cheer and call, 'God save the King!' all together, and saw them waver and fade back into the dark, like a breath fading off a pane.

"But when they came back here to the kitchen, and my father set the lantern down, it seemed they'd both forgot about him. For the drummer turned in the lantern-light—and my father could see the blood still welling out of the hole in his breast—and took the trumpet-sling from around the other's neck, and locked drum and trumpet together again, choosing the letters on the lock very carefully. While he did this, he said:

" 'The word is no more Corunna, but Bayonne. As you left out an "n" in Corunna, so must I leave out an "n" in Bayonne.' And before snapping the padlock, he spelt out the word slowly—'B-A-Y-O-N-E.'

After that, he used no more speech; but turned and hung the two instruments back on the hook; and then took the trumpeter by the arm; and the pair walked out into the darkness, glancing neither to right nor left.

"My father was on the point of following, when he heard a sort of sigh behind him; and there, sitting in the elbow-chair, was the very trumpeter he had just seen walk out by the door! If my father's heart jumped before, you may believe it jumped quicker now. But after a bit, he went up to the man asleep in the chair and put a hand upon him. It was the trumpeter in flesh and blood that he touched; but though the flesh was warm, the trumpeter was dead.

"Well, sir, they buried him three days after; and at first my father was minded to say nothing about his dream (as he thought it). But the day after the funeral, he met Parson Kendall coming from Helston market; and the parson called out: 'Have 'ee heard the news the coach brought down this mornin'?' 'What news?' says my father. 'Why, that peace is agreed upon.' 'None too soon,' says my father. 'Not soon enough for our poor lads at Bayonne,' the parson answered. 'Bayonne!' cried my father, with a jump. 'Why, yes;' and the parson told him all about a great sally the French had made on the night of April 13th. 'Do you happen to know if the 38th Regiment was engaged?' my father asked. 'Come, now,' said Parson Kendall, 'I didn't know you was so well up in the campaign. But, as it happens, I do know that the 38th was engaged, for 'twas they that held a cottage and stopped the French advance.'

"Still my father held his tongue; and when, a week later, he walked into Helston and bought a 'Mercury' off the Sherborne rider, and got the landlord of the 'Angel' to spell out the list of killed and wounded, sure enough, there among the killed was Drummer John Christian of the 38th Foot.

"After this there was nothing for a religious man but to make a clean breast. So my father went up to Parson Kendall, and told the whole story. The parson listened, and put a question or two, and then asked:

" 'Have you tried to open the lock since that night?'

" 'I haven't dared to touch it,' says my father.

" 'Then come along and try.' When the parson came to the cottage here, he took the things off the hook and tried the lock. 'Did he say "Bayonne"? The word has seven letters.'

" 'Not if you spell it with one "n" as he did,' says my father.

"The parson spelt it out—'B-A-Y-O-N-E.' 'Whew!' says he, for the lock had fallen open in his hand.

"He stood considering it a moment, and then he says: 'I tell you what. I shouldn't blab this all round the parish, if I was you. You won't get no credit for truth-telling, and a miracle's wasted on a set of fools. But if you like, I'll shut down the lock again upon a holy word that no one but me shall know, and neither drummer nor trumpeter, dead or alive, shall frighten the secret out of me.'

" 'I wish to heaven you would, parson,' said my father.

"The parson chose the holy word there and then, and shut the lock back upon it, and hung the drum and trumpet back in their place. He is gone long since, taking the word with him. And till the lock is broken by force, nobody will ever separate those two."

In the Tules

BY BRET HARTE

(*1839-1902*)

He had never seen a steamboat in his life. Born and reared in one of the western territories, far from a navigable river, he had only known the "dug-out" or canoe as a means of conveyance across the scant streams whose fordable waters made even those scarcely a necessity. The long, narrow, hooded wagon, drawn by swaying oxen, known familiarly as a "prairie schooner," in which he journeyed across the plains to California in '53, did not help his conception by that nautical figure. And when at last he dropped upon the land of promise through one of the Southern mountain passes he halted all unconsciously upon the low banks of a great yellow river amidst a tangled brake of strange, reed-like grasses that were unknown to him. The river, broadening as it debouched through many channels into a lordly bay, seemed to him the Ultima Thule of his journeyings. Unyoking his oxen on the edge of the luxuriant meadows which blended with scarcely any line of demarcation into the great stream itself, he found the prospect "good" according to his lights and prairial experiences, and, converting his halted wagon into a temporary cabin, he resolved to rest here and "settle."

There was little difficulty in so doing. The cultivated clearings he had passed were few and far between; the land would be his by discovery and occupation; his habits of loneliness and self-reliance made him independent of neighbors. He took his first meal in his new solitude under a spreading willow, but so near his natural boundary that the waters gurgled and oozed in the reeds but a few feet from him. The sun sank, deepening the gold of the river until it might have been the stream of Pactolus itself. But Martin Morse had no imagination; he was not even a gold-seeker; he had simply obeyed the roving instincts of the frontiersman in coming hither. The land was virgin and

unoccupied; it was his; he was alone. These questions settled, he smoked his pipe with less concern over his three thousand miles' transference of habitation than the man of cities who had moved into a next street. When the sun sank, he rolled himself in his blankets in the wagon bed and went quietly to sleep.

But he was presently awakened by something which at first he could not determine to be a noise or an intangible sensation. It was a deep throbbing through the silence of the night—a pulsation that seemed even to be communicated to the rude bed whereon he lay. As it came nearer it separated itself into a labored, monotonous panting, continuous, but distinct from an equally monotonous but fainter beating of the waters, as if the whole track of the river were being coursed and trodden by a multitude of swiftly trampling feet. A strange feeling took possession of him—half of fear, half of curious expectation. It was coming nearer. He rose, leaped hurriedly from the wagon, and ran to the bank. The night was dark; at first he saw nothing before him but the steel-black sky pierced with far-spaced, irregularly scattered stars. Then there seemed to be approaching him, from the left, another and more symmetrical constellation—a few red and blue stars high above the river, with three compact lines of larger planetary lights flashing towards him and apparently on his own level. It was almost upon him; he involuntarily drew back as the strange phenomenon swept abreast of where he stood, and resolved itself into a dark yet airy bulk, whose vagueness, topped by enormous towers, was yet illuminated by those open squares of light that he had taken for stars, but which he saw now were brilliantly lit windows.

Their vivid rays shot through the reeds and sent broad bands across the meadow, the stationary wagon, and the slumbering oxen. But all this was nothing to the inner life they disclosed through lifted curtains and open blinds, which was the crowning revelation of this strange and wonderful spectacle. Elegantly dressed men and women moved through brilliantly lit and elaborately gilt saloons; in one a banquet seemed to be spread, served by white-jacketed servants; in another were men playing cards around marble-topped tables; in another the light flashed back again from the mirrors and glistening glasses and decanters of a gorgeous refreshment saloon; in smaller openings there was the shy disclosure of dainty white curtains and velvet lounges of more intimate apartments.

Martin Morse stood enthralled and mystified. It was as if some invisible Asmodeus had revealed to this simple frontiersman a world of which he had never dreamed. It was *the* world,—a world of which he knew nothing in his simple, rustic habits and profound Western isolation,—sweeping by him with the rush of an unknown planet. In another moment it was gone; a shower of sparks shot up from one of the towers and fell all around him, and then vanished, even as he remembered the set piece of "Fourth of July" fireworks had vanished in his own rural town when he was a boy. The darkness fell with it too. But such was his utter absorption and breathless preoccupation, that only a cold chill recalled him to himself, and he found he was standing mid-leg deep in the surge cast over the low banks by this passage of the first steamboat he had ever seen!

He waited for it the next night, when it appeared a little later from the opposite direction on its return trip. He watched it the next night and the next. Hereafter he never missed it, coming or going—whatever the hard and weary preoccupations of his new and lonely life. He felt he could not have slept without seeing it go by. Oddly enough, his interest and desire did not go further. Even had he the time and money to spend in a passage on the boat, and thus actively realize the great world of which he had only these rare glimpses, a certain proud, rustic shyness kept him from it. It was not *his* world; he could not affront the snubs that his ignorance and inexperience would have provoked, and he was dimly conscious, as so many of us are in our ignorance, that in mingling with it he would simply lose the easy privileges of alien criticism. For there was much that he did not understand, and some things that grated upon his lonely independence.

One night, a lighter one than those previous, he lingered a little longer in the moonlight to watch the phosphorescent wake of the retreating boat. Suddenly it struck him that there was a certain irregular splashing in the water, quite different from the regular, diagonally crossing surges that the boat swept upon the bank. Looking at it more intently, he saw a black object turning in the water like a porpoise, and then the unmistakable uplifting of a black arm in an unskillful swimmer's overhand stroke. It was a struggling man. But it was quickly evident that the current was too strong and the turbulence of the shallow water too great for his efforts. Without a moment's hesitation, clad as he was in only his shirt and trousers, Morse strode

into the reeds, and the next moment, with a call of warning, was swimming towards the now wildly struggling figure. But, from some unknown reason, as Morse approached him nearer the man uttered some incoherent protest and desperately turned away, throwing off Morse's extended arm.

Attributing this only to the vague convulsions of a drowning man, Morse, a skilled swimmer, managed to clutch his shoulder, and propelled him at arm's length, still struggling, apparently with as much reluctance as incapacity, towards the bank. As their feet touched the reeds and slimy bottom the man's resistance ceased, and he lapsed quite listlessly in Morse's arms. Half lifting, half dragging his burden, he succeeded at last in gaining the strip of meadow, and deposited the unconscious man beneath the willow-tree. Then he ran to his wagon for whiskey.

But, to his surprise, on his return the man was already sitting up and wringing the water from his clothes. He then saw for the first time, by the clear moonlight, that the stranger was elegantly dressed and of striking appearance, and was clearly a part of that bright and fascinating world which Morse had been contemplating in his solitude. He eagerly took the proffered tin cup and drank the whiskey. Then he rose to his feet, staggered a few steps forward, and glanced curiously around him at the still motionless wagon, the few felled trees and evidence of "clearing," and even at the rude cabin of logs and canvas just beginning to rise from the ground a few paces distant, and said, impatiently:—

"Where the devil am I?"

Morse hesitated. He was unable to name the locality of his dwelling-place. He answered briefly:—

"On the right bank of the Sacramento."

The stranger turned upon him a look of suspicion not unmingled with resentment.

"Oh!" he said, with ironical gravity, "and I suppose that this water you picked me out of was the Sacramento River. Thank you!"

Morse, with slow Western patience, explained that he had only settled there three weeks ago, and the place had no name.

"What's your nearest town, then?"

"Thar ain't any. Thar's a blacksmith's shop and grocery at the

cross-roads, twenty miles further on, but it's got no name as I've heard on."

The stranger's look of suspicion passed.

"Well," he said, in an imperative fashion, which, however, seemed as much the result of habit as the occasion, "I want a horse, and mighty quick, too."

"Hain't got any."

"No horse? How did you yet to this place?"

Morse pointed to the slumbering oxen.

The stranger again stared curiously at him. After a pause he said, with a half-pitying, half-humorous smile:—

"Pike—aren't you?"

Whether Morse did or did not know that this current California slang for a denizen of the bucolic West implied a certain contempt, he replied simply:—

"I'm from Pike County, Mizzouri."

"Well," said the stranger, resuming his impatient manner, "you must beg or steal a horse from your neighbors."

"Thar ain't any neighbor nearer than fifteen miles."

"Then send fifteen miles! Stop!" He opened his still clinging shirt and drew out a belt pouch, which he threw to Morse. "There! there's two hundred and fifty dollars in that. Now, I want a horse. Sabe?"

"Thar ain't anyone to send," said Morse quietly.

"Do you mean to say you are all alone here?"

"Yes."

"And you fished me out—all by yourself?"

"Yes."

The stranger again examined him curiously. Then he suddenly stretched out his hand and grasped his companion's.

"All right; if you can't send, I reckon I can manage to walk over there tomorrow."

"I was goin' on to say," said Morse simply, "that if you'll lie by tonight, I'll start over sun-up, after puttin' out the cattle, and fetch you back a horse afore noon."

"That's enough." He, however, remained looking curiously at Morse. "Did you never hear," he said, with a singular smile, "that it was about the meanest kind of luck that could happen to you to save a drowning man?"

"No," said Morse simply. "I reckon it orter be the meanest if you *didn't*."

"That depends upon the man you save," said the stranger, with the same ambiguous smile, "and whether the *saving* him is only putting things off. Look here," he added, with an abrupt return to his imperative style, "can't you give me some dry clothes?"

Morse brought him a pair of overalls and a "hickory shirt," well worn, but smelling strongly of a recent wash with coarse soap. The stranger put them on while his companion busied himself in collecting a pile of sticks and dry leaves.

"What's that for?" said the stranger suddenly.

"A fire to dry your clothes."

The stranger calmly kicked the pile aside.

"Not any fire tonight if I know it," he said brusquely. Before Morse could resent his quickly changing moods he continued, in another tone, dropping to an easy reclining position beneath the tree, "Now, tell me all about yourself, and what you are doing here."

Thus commanded, Morse patiently repeated his story from the time he had left his backwoods cabin to his selection of the river-bank for a "location." He pointed out the rich quality of this alluvial bottom and its adaptability for the raising of stock, which he hoped soon to acquire. The stranger smiled grimly, raised himself to a sitting position, and, taking a penknife from his damp clothes, began to clean his nails in the bright moonlight—an occupation which made the simple Morse wander vaguely in his narration.

"And you don't know that this hole will give you chills and fever till you'll shake yourself out of your boots?"

Morse had lived before in aguish districts, and had no fear.

"And you never heard that some night the whole river will rise up and walk over you and your cabin and your stock?"

"No. For I reckon to move my shanty farther back."

The man shut up his penknife with a click, and rose.

"If you've got to get up at sunrise, we'd better be turning in. I suppose you can give me a pair of blankets?"

Morse pointed to the wagon.

"Thar's a shakedown in the wagon bed; you kin lie there."

Nevertheless he hesitated, and, with the inconsequence and abruptness of a shy man, continued the previous conversation.

"I shouldn't like to move far away, for them steamboats is pow-ful kempany o' nights. I never seed one afore I kem here," and then, with the inconsistency of a reserved man, and without a word of further preliminary, he launched into a confidential disclosure of his late experiences. The stranger listened with a singular interest and a quietly searching eye.

"Then you were watching the boat very closely just now when you saw me. What else did you see? Anything before that—before you saw me in the water?"

"No—the boat had got well off before I saw you at all."

"Ah," said the stranger. "Well, I'm going to turn in."

He walked to the wagon, mounted it, and by the time that Morse had reached it with his wet clothes he was already wrapped in the blankets. A moment later he seemed to be in a profound slumber.

It was only then, when his guest was lying helplessly at his mercy, that he began to realize his strange experiences. The domination of this man had been so complete that Morse, although by nature independent and self-reliant, had not permitted himself to question his right or to resent his rudeness. He had accepted his guest's careless or premeditated silence regarding the particulars of his accident as a matter of course, and had never dreamed of questioning him. That it was a natural accident of that great world so apart from his own experiences he did not doubt, and thought no more about it. The advent of the man himself was greater to him than the causes which brought him there. He was as yet quite unconscious of the complete fascination this mysterious stranger held over him, but he found himself shyly pleased with even the slight interest he had displayed in his affairs, and his hand felt yet warm and tingling from his sudden soft but expressive grasp, as if it had been a woman's. There is a simple intuition of friendship in some lonely, self-abstracted natures that is nearly akin to love at first sight. Even the audacities and insolence of this stranger affected Morse as he might have been touched and captivated by the coquetries or imperiousness of some bucolic virgin. And this reserved and shy frontiersman found himself that night sleepless, and hovering with an abashed timidity and consciousness around the wagon that sheltered his guest, as if he had been a very Corydon watching the moonlit couch of some slumbering Amaryllis.

He was off by daylight—after having placed a rude breakfast by

the side of the still sleeping guest—and before midday he had returned with a horse. When he handed the stranger his pouch, less the amount he had paid for the horse, the man said curtly,—

"What's that for?"

"Your change. I paid only fifty dollars for the horse."

The stranger regarded him with his peculiar smile. Then, replacing the pouch in his belt, he shook Morse's hand again and mounted the horse.

"So your name's Martin Morse! Well—good-by, Morsey!"

Morse hesitated. A blush rose to his dark cheek.

"You didn't tell me *your* name," he said. "In case—"

"In case I'm *wanted?* Well, you can call me Captain Jack."

He smiled, and, nodding his head, put spurs to his mustang and cantered away.

Morse did not do much work that day, falling into abstracted moods and living over his experiences of the previous night, until he fancied he could almost see his strange guest again. The narrow strip of meadow was haunted by him. There was the tree under which he had first placed him, and that was where he had seen him sitting up in his dripping but well-fitting clothes. In the rough garments he had worn and returned lingered a new scent of some delicate soap, overpowering the strong alkali flavor of his own. He was early by the riverside, having a vague hope, he knew not why, that he should again see him and recognize him among the passengers. He was wading out among the reeds, in the faint light of the rising moon, recalling the exact spot where he had first seen the stranger, when he was suddenly startled by the rolling over in the water of some black object that had caught against the bank, but had been dislodged by his movements. To his horror it bore a faint resemblance to his first vision of the preceding night. But a second glance at the helplessly floating hair and bloated outline showed him that it was a *dead* man, and of a type and build far different from his former companion. There was a bruise upon his matted forehead and an enormous wound in his throat already washed bloodless, white, and waxen. An inexplicable fear came upon him, not at the sight of the corpse, for he had been in Indian massacres and had rescued bodies mutilated beyond recognition; but from some moral dread that, strangely enough, quickened and deepened with the far-off pant of the advancing steamboat. Scarcely knowing why, he dragged

the body hurriedly ashore, concealing it in the reeds, as if he were disposing of the evidence of his own crime. Then, to his preposterous terror, he noticed that the panting of the steamboat and the beat of its paddles were "slowing" as the vague bulk came in sight, until a huge wave from the suddenly arrested wheels sent a surge like an enormous heart-beat pulsating through the sedge that half submerged him. The flashing of three or four lanterns on deck and the motionless line of lights abreast of him dazzled his eyes, but he knew that the low fringe of willows hid his house and wagon completely from view. A vague murmur of voices from the deck was suddenly overridden by a sharp order, and to his relief the slowly revolving wheels again sent a pulsation through the water, and the great fabric moved solemnly away. A sense of relief came over him, he knew not why, and he was conscious that for the first time he had not cared to look at the boat.

When the moon arose he again examined the body, and took from its clothing a few articles of identification and some papers of formality and precision, which he vaguely conjectured to be some law papers from their resemblance to the phrasing of sheriffs' and electors' notices which he had seen in the papers. He then buried the corpse in a shallow trench, which he dug by the light of the moon. He had no question of responsibility; his pioneer training had not included coroners' inquests in its experience; in giving the body a speedy and secure burial from predatory animals he did what one frontiersman would do for another —what he hoped might be done for *him*. If his previous unaccountable feelings returned occasionally, it was not from that; but rather from some uneasiness in regard to his late guest's possible feelings, and a regret that he had not been here at the finding of the body. That it would in some way have explained his own accident he did not doubt.

The boat did not "slow up" the next night, but passed as usual; yet three or four days elapsed before he could look forward to its coming with his old extravagant and half-exalted curiosity, which was his nearest approach to imagination. He was then able to examine it more closely, for the appearance of the stranger, whom he now began to call "his friend" in his verbal communings with himself, but whom he did not seem destined to again discover; until one day, to his astonishment, a couple of fine horses were brought to his clearing by a stock-drover. They had been "ordered" to be left there. In vain Morse expostulated and questioned.

"Your name's Martin Morse, ain't it?" said the drover, with business brusqueness; "and I reckon there ain't no other man o' that name around here?"

"No," said Morse.

"Well, then they're *yours*."

"But who sent them?" insisted Morse. "What was his name, and where does he live?"

"I didn't know ez I was called upon to give the pedigree o' buyers," said the drover dryly; "but the horses is 'Morgan,' you can bet your life." He grinned as he rode away.

That Captain Jack sent them, and that it was a natural prelude to his again visiting him, Morse did not doubt, and for a few days he lived in that dream. But Captain Jack did not come. The animals were of great service to him in "rounding up" the stock he now easily took in for pasturage, and saved him the necessity of having a partner or a hired man. The idea that this superior gentleman in fine clothes might ever appear to him in the former capacity had even flitted through his brain, but he had rejected it with a sigh. But the thought that, with luck and industry, he himself might, in course of time, approximate to Captain Jack's evident station, *did* occur to him, and was an incentive to energy. Yet it was quite distinct from the ordinary workingman's ambition of wealth and state. It was only that it might make him more worthy of his friend. The great world was still as it had appeared to him in the passing boat—a thing to wonder at—to be above—and to criticise.

For all that, he prospered in his occupation. But one day he awoke with listless limbs and feet that scarcely carried him through his daily labors. At night his listlessness changed to active pain and a feverishness that seemed to impel him towards the fateful river, as if his one aim in life was to drink up its waters and bathe in its yellow stream. But whenever he seemed to attempt it, strange dreams assailed him of dead bodies arising with swollen and distorted lips to touch his own as he strove to drink, or of his mysterious guest battling with him in its current, and driving him ashore. Again, when he essayed to bathe his parched and crackling limbs in its flood, he would be confronted with the dazzling lights of the motionless steamboat and the glare of stony eyes—until he fled in aimless terror. How long this lasted he

knew not, until one morning he awoke in his new cabin with a strange man sitting by his bed and a negress in the doorway.

"You've had a sharp attack of 'tule fever,'" said the stranger, dropping Morse's listless wrist and answering his questioning eyes, "but you're all right now, and will pull through."

"Who are you?" stammered Morse feebly.

"Dr. Duchesne, of Sacramento."

"How did you come here?"

"I was ordered to come to you and bring a nurse, as you were alone. There she is." He pointed to the smiling negress.

"*Who* ordered you?"

The doctor smiled with professional tolerance. "One of your friends, of course."

"But what was his name?"

"Really, I don't remember. But don't distress yourself. He has settled for everything right royally. You have only to get strong now. My duty is ended, and I can safely leave you with the nurse. Only when you are strong again, I say—and *he* says—keep back farther from the river."

And that was all he knew. For even the nurse who attended him through the first days of his brief convalescence would tell him nothing more. He quickly got rid of her and resumed his work, for a new and strange phase of his simple, childish affection for his benefactor, partly superinduced by his illness, was affecting him. He was beginning to feel the pain of an unequal friendship; he was dimly conscious that his mysterious guest was only coldly returning his hospitality and benefits, while holding aloof from any association with him, and indicating the immeasurable distance that separated their future intercourse. He had withheld any kind message or sympathetic greeting; he had kept back even his *name*. The shy, proud, ignorant heart of the frontiersman swelled beneath the fancied slight, which left him helpless alike of reproach or resentment. He could not return the horses, although in a fit of childish indignation he had resolved not to use them; he could not reimburse him for the doctor's bill although he had sent away the nurse.

He took a foolish satisfaction in not moving back from the river, with a faint hope that his ignoring of Captain Jack's advice might mysteriously be conveyed to him. He even thought of selling out his

location and abandoning it, that he might escape the cold surveillance of his heartless friend. All this was undoubtedly childish, but there is an irrepressible simplicity of youth in all deep feeling, and the worldly inexperience of the frontiersman left him as innocent as a child. In this phase of his unrequited affection he even went so far as to seek some news of Captain Jack at Sacramento, and, following out his foolish quest, to even take the steamboat from thence to Stockton.

What happened to him then was perhaps the common experience of such natures. Once upon the boat the illusion of the great world it contained for him utterly vanished. He found it noisy, formal, insincere, and—had he ever understood or used the word in his limited vocabulary—*vulgar*. Rather, perhaps, it seemed to him that the prevailing sentiment and action of those who frequented it—and for whom it was built—were of a lower grade than his own. And, strangely enough, this gave him none of his former sense of critical superiority, but only of his own utter and complete isolation. He wandered in his rough frontiersman's clothes from deck to cabin, from airy galleries to long saloons, alone, unchallenged, unrecognized, as if he were again haunting it only in spirit, as he had so often done in his dreams.

His presence on the fringe of some voluble crowd caused no interruption; to him their speech was almost foreign in its allusions to things he did not understand, or, worse, seemed inconsistent with their eagerness and excitement. How different from all this were his old recollections of slowly oncoming teams, uplifted above the level horizon of the plains in his former wanderings; the few sauntering figures that met him as man to man and exchanged the chronicle of the road; the record of Indian tracks; the finding of a spring; the discovery of pasturage, with the lazy, restful hospitality of the night! And how fierce here this continual struggle for dominance and existence, even in this lull of passage. For above all and through all he was conscious of the feverish haste of speed and exertion.

The boat trembled, vibrated, and shook with every stroke of the ponderous pistol. The laughter of the crowd, the exchange of gossip and news, the banquet at the long table, the newspapers and books in the reading-room, even the luxurious couches in the staterooms, were all dominated, thrilled, and pulsating with the perpetual throb of the demon of hurry and unrest. And when at last a horrible fascination

dragged him into the engine-room, and he saw the cruel, relentless machinery at work, he seemed to recognize and understand some intelligent but pitiless Moloch, who was dragging this feverish world at its heels.

Later he was seated in a corner of the hurricane deck, whence he could view the monotonous banks of the river; yet, perhaps by certain signs unobservable to others, he knew he was approaching his own locality. He knew that his cabin and clearing would be undiscernible behind the fringe of willows on the bank, but he already distinguished the points where a few cottonwoods struggled into a promontory of lighter foliage beyond them. Here voices fell upon his ear, and he was suddenly aware that two men had lazily crossed over from the other side of the boat, and were standing before him looking upon the bank.

"It was about here, I reckon," said one listlessly, as if continuing a previous lagging conversation, "that it must have happened. For it was after we were making for the bend we've just passed that the deputy, goin' to the stateroom below us, found the door locked and the window open. But both men—Jack Despard and Seth Hall, the sheriff—weren't to be found. Not a trace of 'em. The boat was searched, but all for nothing. The idea is that the sheriff, arter getting his prisoner comf'ble in the stateroom, took off Jack's handcuffs and locked the door; that Jack, who was mighty desp'rate, bolted through the window into the river, and the sheriff, who was no slouch, arter him. Others allow—for the chairs and things was all tossed about in the stateroom—that the two men clinched *thar,* and Jack choked Hall and chucked him out, and then slipped cl'ar into the water himself, for the stateroom window was just ahead of the paddle-box, and the cap'n allows that no man or men could fall afore the paddles and live. Anyhow, that was all they ever knew of it."

"And there wasn't no trace of them found?" said the second man, after a long pause.

"No. Cap'n says them paddles would hev' just snatched 'em and slung 'em round and round and buried 'em 'way down in the ooze of the river bed, with all the silt of the current atop of 'em, and they mightn't come up for ages; or else the wheels might have waltzed 'em 'way up to Sacramento until there wasn't enough left of 'em to float, and dropped 'em when the boat stopped."

"It was a mighty fool risk for a man like Despard to take," resumed the second speaker as he turned away with a slight yawn.

"Bet your life! but he was desp'rate, and the sheriff had got him sure! And they *do* say that he was superstitious, like all them gamblers, and allowed that a man who was fixed to die by a rope or a pistol wasn't to be washed out of life by water."

The two figures drifted lazily away, but Morse sat rigid and motionless. Yet, strange to say, only one idea came to him clearly out of this awful revelation—the thought that his friend was still true to him—and that his strange absence and mysterious silence were fully accounted for and explained. And with it came the more thrilling fancy that this man was alive now to *him* alone.

He was the sole custodian of his secret. The morality of the question, while it profoundly disturbed him, was rather in reference to its effect upon the chances of Captain Jack and the power it gave his enemies than his own conscience. He would rather that his friend should have proven the proscribed outlaw who retained an unselfish interest in him than the superior gentleman who was coldly wiping out his gratitude. He thought he understood now the reason of his visitor's strange and varying moods—even his bitter superstitious warning in regard to the probable curse entailed upon one who should save a drowning man. Of this he recked little; enough that he fancied that Captain Jack's concern in his illness was heightened by that fear, and this assurance of his protecting friendship thrilled him with pleasure.

There was no reason now why he should not at once go back to his farm, where, at least, Captain Jack would always find him; and he did so, returning on the same boat. He was now fully recovered from his illness, and calmer in mind; he redoubled his labors to put himself in a position to help the mysterious fugitive when the time should come. The remote farm should always be a haven of refuge for him, and in this hope he forbore to take any outside help, remaining solitary and alone, that Captain Jack's retreat should be inviolate. And so the long, dry season passed, the hay was gathered, the pasturing herds sent home, and the first rains dimpling like shot the broadening surface of the river were all that broke his unending solitude. In this enforced attitude of waiting and expectancy he was exalted and strengthened by a new idea. He was not a religious man, but, dimly remembering the exhortations of some camp-meeting of his boyhood, he conceived the

idea that he might have been selected to work out the regeneration of Captain Jack. What might not come of this meeting and communing together in this lonely spot? That anything was due to the memory of the murdered sheriff, whose bones were rotting in the trench that he daily but unconcernedly passed, did not occur to him. Perhaps his mind was not large enough for the double consideration. Friendship and love—and, for the matter of that, religion—are eminently one-ideaed.

But one night he awakened with a start. His hand, which was hanging out of his bunk, was dabbling idly in water. He had barely time to spring to his middle in what seemed to be a slowly filling tank before the door fell out as from that inward pressure, and his whole shanty collapsed like a pack of cards. But it fell outwards, the roof sliding from over his head like a withdrawn canopy; and he was swept from his feet against it, and thence out into what might have been another world! For the rain had ceased, and the full moon revealed only one vast, illimitable expanse of water! It was not an overflow, but the whole rushing river magnified and repeated a thousand times, which, even as he gasped for breath and clung to the roof, was bearing him away he knew not whither. But it was bearing him away upon its centre, for as he cast one swift glance toward his meadows he saw they were covered by the same sweeping torrent, dotted with his sailing hayricks and reaching to the wooded foothills. It was the great flood of '54. In its awe-inspiring completeness it might have seemed to him the primeval Deluge.

As his frail raft swept under a cottonwood he caught at one of the overhanging limbs, and, working his way desperately along the bough, at last reached a secure position in the fork of the tree. Here he was for the moment safe. But the devastation viewed from this height was only the more appalling. Every sign of his clearing, all evidence of his past year's industry, had disappeared. He was now conscious for the first time of the lowing of the few cattle he had kept, as, huddled together on a slight eminence, they one by one slipped over struggling into the flood. The shining bodies of his dead horses rolled by him as he gazed. The lower-lying limbs of the sycamore near him were bending with the burden of the lighter articles from his overturned wagon and cabin which they had caught and retained, and a rake was securely lodged in a bough. The habitual solitude of his locality was now

strangely invaded by drifting sheds, agricultural implements, and fence rails from unknown and remote neighbors, and he could faintly hear the far-off calling of some unhappy farmer adrift upon a spar of his wrecked and shattered house. When day broke he was cold and hungry.

Hours passed in hopeless monotony, with no slackening or diminution of the waters. Even the drifts became less, and a vacant sea at last spread before him on which nothing moved. An awful silence impressed him. In the afternoon rain again began to fall on this gray, nebulous expanse, until the whole world seemed made of aqueous vapor. He had but one idea now—the coming of the evening boat, and he would reserve his strength to swim to it. He did not know until later that it could no longer follow the old channel of the river, and passed far beyond his sight and hearing. With his disappointment and exposure that night came a return of his old fever. His limbs were alternately racked with pain or benumbed and lifeless. He could scarcely retain his position—at times he scarcely cared to—and speculated upon ending his sufferings by a quick plunge downwards. In other moments of lucid misery he was conscious of having wandered in his mind; of having seen the dead face of the murdered sheriff, washed out of his shallow grave by the flood, staring at him from the water; to this was added the hallucination of noises. He heard voices, his own name called by a voice he knew—Captain Jack's!

Suddenly he started, but in that fatal movement lost his balance and plunged downwards. But before the water closed above his head he had had a cruel glimpse of help near him; of a flashing light—of the black hull of a tug not many yards away—of moving figures—the sensation of a sudden plunge following his own, the grip of a strong hand upon his collar, and—unconsciousness!

When he came to he was being lifted in a boat from the tug and rowed through the deserted streets of a large city, until he was taken in through the second-story window of a half-submerged hotel, and cared for. But all his questions yielded only the information that the tug—a privately procured one, not belonging to the Public Relief Association—had been dispatched for him with special directions, by a man who acted as one of the crew, and who was the one who had plunged in for him at the last moment. The man had left the boat at

Stockton. There was nothing more? Yes!—he had left a letter. Morse seized it feverishly. It contained only a few lines:—

We are quits now. You are all right. I have saved *you* from drowning, and shifted the curse to my own shoulders. Good-by.

CAPTAIN JACK.

The astounded man attempted to rise—to utter an exclamation—but fell back, unconscious.

Weeks passed before he was able to leave his bed, and then only as an impoverished and physically shattered man. He had no means to re-stock the farm left bare by the subsiding water. A kindly train-packer offered him a situation as muleteer in a pack-train going to the mountains, for he knew tracks and passes, and could ride. The mountains gave him back a little of the vigor he had lost in the river valley, but none of its dreams and ambitions. One day, while tracking a lost mule, he stopped to slake his thirst in a water-hole—all that the summer had left of a lonely mountain torrent. Enlarging the hole to give drink to his beast also, he was obliged to dislodge and throw out with the red soil some bits of honeycomb rock, which were so queer-looking and so heavy as to attract his attention. Two of the largest he took back to camp with him. They were gold! From the locality he took out a fortune. Nobody wondered. To the Californian's superstition it was perfectly natural. It was "nigger luck"—the luck of the stupid, the ignorant, the inexperienced, the non-seeker—the irony of the gods!

But the simple, bucolic nature that had sustained itself against temptation with patient industry and lonely self-concentration succumbed to rapidly acquired wealth. So it chanced that one day, with a crowd of excitement-loving spendthrifts and companions, he found himself on the outskirts of a lawless mountain town. An eager, frantic crowd had already assembled there—a desperado was to be lynched! Pushing his way through the crowd for a nearer view of the exciting spectacle, the changed and reckless Morse was stopped by armed men only at the foot of a cart, which upheld a quiet, determined man, who, with a rope around his neck, was scornfully surveying the mob, that held the other end of the rope drawn across the limb of a tree above him. The eyes of the doomed man caught those of Morse—his expres-

sion changed—a kindly smile lit his face—he bowed his proud head for the first time, with an easy gesture of farewell.

And then, with a cry, Morse threw himself upon the nearest armed guard, and a fierce struggle began. He had overpowered one adversary and seized another in his hopeless fight toward the cart when the half-astonished crowd felt that something must be done. It was done with a sharp report, the upward curl of smoke, and the falling back of the guard as Morse staggered forward *free*—with a bullet in his heart. Yet even then he did not fall until he reached the cart, when he lapsed forward, dead, with his arms outstretched and his head at the doomed man's feet.

There was something so supreme and all-powerful in this hopeless act of devotion that the heart of the multitude thrilled and then recoiled aghast at its work, and a single word or gesture from the doomed man himself would have set him free. But they say—and it is credibly recorded—that as Captain Jack Despard looked down upon the hopeless sacrifice at his feet his eyes blazed, and he flung upon the crowd a curse so awful and sweeping that, hardened as they were, their blood ran cold, and then leaped furiously to their cheeks.

"And now," he said, coolly tightening the rope around his neck with a jerk of his head, "go on, and be d—d to you! I'm ready."

They did not hesitate this time. And Martin Morse and Captain Jack Despard were buried in the same grave.

MS. Found in a Bottle

BY EDGAR ALLAN POE

(*1809-1849*)

Qui n'a plus qu'un moment à vivre
N'a plus rien à dissimuler.
QUINAULT, *Atys.*

OF my country and of my family I have little to say. Ill usage and length of years have driven me from the one, and estranged me from the other. Hereditary wealth afforded me an education of no common order, and a contemplative turn of mind enabled me to methodise the stores which early study diligently garnered up. Beyond all things, the works of the German moralists gave me great delight; not from my ill-advised admiration of their eloquent madness, but from the ease with which my habits of rigid thoughts enabled me to detect their falsities. I have often been reproached with the aridity of my genius; a deficiency of imagination has been imputed to me as a crime; and the Pyrrhonism of my opinions has at all times rendered me notorious. Indeed, a strong relish for physical philosophy has, I fear, tinctured my mind with a very common error of this age—I mean the habit of referring occurrences, even the least susceptible of such reference, to the principles of that science. Upon the whole, no person could be less liable than myself to be led away from the severe precincts of truth by the *ignes fatui* of superstition. I have thought proper to premise this much, lest the incredible tale I have to tell should be considered rather the raving of a crude imagination, than the positive experience of a mind to which the reveries of fancy have been a dead letter and a nullity.

After many years spent in foreign travel, I sailed in the year 18—, from the port of Batavia, in the rich and populous island of Java, on a voyage to the Archipelago of the Sunda Islands. I went as

passenger—having no other inducement than a kind of nervous restlessness which haunted me as a fiend.

Our vessel was a beautiful ship of about four hundred tons, copper-fastened, and built at Bombay of Malabar teak. She was freighted with cotton-wool and oil, from the Laccadive Islands. We had also on board coir, jaggeree, ghee, cocoa-nuts, and a few cases of opium. The stowage was clumsily done, and the vessel consequently crank.

We got under way with a mere breath of wind, and for many days stood along the eastern coast of Java, without any other incident to beguile the monotony of our course than the occasional meeting with some of the small grabs of the Archipelago to which we were bound.

One evening, leaning over the taffrail, I observed a very singular isolated cloud, to the NW. It was remarkable, as well from its colour as from its being the first we had seen since our departure from Batavia. I watched it attentively until sunset, when it spread all at once to the eastward and westward, girting in the horizon with a narrow strip of vapour, and looking like a long line of low beach. My notice was soon afterward attracted by the dusky-red appearance of the moon, and the peculiar character of the sea. The latter was undergoing a rapid change, and the water seemed to be more than usually transparent. Although I could distinctly see the bottom, yet, heaving the lead, I found the ship in fifteen fathoms. The air now became intolerably hot, and was loaded with spiral exhalations similar to those arising from heated iron. As night came on, every breath of wind died away, and a more entire calm it is impossible to conceive. The flame of a candle burned upon the poop without the least perceptible motion, and a long hair, held between the finger and thumb, hung, without the possibility of detecting a vibration. However, as the captain said he could perceive no indication of danger, and as we were drifting in bodily to shore, he ordered the sails to be furled, and the anchor let go. No watch was set, and the crew, consisting principally of Malays, stretched themselves deliberately upon deck. I went below —not without a full presentiment of evil. Indeed, every appearance warranted me in apprehending a simoon. I told the captain of my fears; but he paid no attention to what I said, and left me without deigning to give a reply. My uneasiness, however, prevented me from sleeping, and about midnight I went upon deck. As I placed my foot upon the upper step of the companion-ladder, I was startled by a loud,

humming noise, like that occasioned by the rapid revolution of a mill-wheel, and before I could ascertain its meaning, I found the ship quivering to its centre. In the next instant a wilderness of foam hurled us upon our beam-ends, and, rushing over us fore and aft, swept the entire decks from stem to stern.

The extreme fury of the blast proved, in a great measure, the salvation of the ship. Although completely water-logged, yet, as her masts had gone by the board, she rose, after a minute, heavily from the sea, and, staggering awhile beneath the immense pressure of the tempest, finally righted.

By what miracle I escaped destruction it is impossible to say. Stunned by the shock of the water, I found myself upon recovery, jammed in between the stern-post and rudder. With great difficulty I regained my feet, and looking dizzily around, was at first struck with the idea of our being among breakers; so terrific, beyond the wildest imagination, was the whirlpool of mountainous and foaming ocean within which we were engulfed. After a while I heard the voice of an old Swede, who had shipped with us at the moment of leaving port. I halloed to him with all my strength, and presently he came reeling aft. We soon discovered that we were the sole survivors of the accident. All on deck, with the exception of ourselves, had been swept overboard; the captain and mates must have perished while they slept, for the cabins were deluged with water. Without assistance we could expect to do little for the security of the ship, and our exertions were at first paralysed by the momentary expectation of going down. Our cable had, of course, parted like pack-thread, at the first breath of the hurricane, or we should have been instantaneously overwhelmed. We scudded with frightful velocity before the sea, and the water made clear breaches over us. The framework of our stern was shattered excessively, and, in almost every respect, we had received considerable injury; but to our extreme joy we found the pumps unchoked, and that we had made no great shifting of our ballast. The main fury of the blast had already blown over, and we apprehended little danger from the violence of the wind; but we looked forward to its total cessation with dismay; well believing that in our shattered condition, we should inevitably perish in the tremendous swell which would ensue. But this very just apprehension seemed by no means likely to be soon verified. For five entire days and nights—during which our only sub-

stance was a small quantity of jaggeree, procured with great difficulty from the forecastle—the hulk flew at a rate defying computation, before rapidly succeeding flaws of wind, which, without equalling the first violence of the simoon, were still more terrific than any tempest I had before encountered. Our course for the first four days was, with trifling variations, SE by S.; and we must have run down the coast of New Holland. On the fifth day the cold became extreme, although the wind had hauled round a point more to the northward. The sun rose with a sickly yellow lustre, and clambered a very few degrees above the horizon—emitting no decisive light. There were no clouds apparent, yet the wind was upon the increase, and blew with a fitful and unsteady fury. About noon, as nearly as we could guess, our attention was again arrested by the appearance of the sun. It gave out no light properly so called, but a dull and sullen glow without reflection, as if all its rays were polarised. Just before sinking within the turgid sea, its central fires suddenly went out, as if hurriedly extinguished by some unaccountable power. It was a dim, silver-like rim, alone, as it rushed down the unfathomable ocean.

We waited in vain for the arrival of the sixth day—that day to me has not yet arrived—to the Swede never did arrive. Thenceforward we were enshrouded in pitchy darkness, so that we could not have seen an object at twenty paces from the ship. Eternal night continued to envelop us, all unrelieved by the phosphoric sea-brilliancy to which we had been accustomed in the tropics. We observed, too, that, although the tempest continued to rage with unabated violence, there was no longer to be discovered the usual appearance of surf, or foam, which had hitherto attended us. All around were horror, and thick gloom, and a black sweltering desert of ebony. Superstitious terror crept by degrees into the spirit of the old Swede, and my own soul was wrapped in silent wonder. We neglected all care of the ship, as worse than useless, and securing ourselves as well as possible, to the stump of the mizzen-mast, looked out bitterly into the world of ocean. We had no means of calculating time, nor could we form any guess of our situation. We were, however, well aware of having made farther to the southward than any previous navigators, and felt great amazement at not meeting with the usual impediments of ice. In the meantime every moment threatened to be our last—every mountainous billow hurried to overwhelm us. The swell surpassed anything I had

imagined possible, and that we were not instantly buried is a miracle. My companion spoke of the lightness of our cargo, and reminded me of the excellent qualities of our ship; but I could not help feeling the utter hopelessness of hope itself, and prepared myself gloomily for that death which I thought nothing could defer beyond an hour, as, with every knot of way the ship made, the swelling of the black stupendous seas became more dismally appalling. At times we gasped for breath at an elevation beyond the albatross—at times became dizzy with the velocity of our descent into some watery hell, where the air grew stagnant, and no sound disturbed the slumbers of the kraken.

We were at the bottom of one of these abysses, when a quick scream from my companion broke fearfully upon the night. "See! see!" cried he, shrieking in my ears, "Almighty God! see! see!" As he spoke I became aware of a dull sullen glare of red light which streamed down the sides of the vast chasm where we lay, and threw a fitful brilliancy upon our deck. Casting my eyes upwards, I beheld a spectacle which froze the current of my blood. At a terrific height, directly above us, and upon the very verge of the precipitous descent, hovered a gigantic ship, of perhaps four thousand tons. Although upreared upon the summit of a wave more than a hundred times her own altitude, her apparent size still exceeded that of any ship of the line or East-Indiaman in existence. Her huge hull was of a deep dingy black, unrelieved by any of the customary carvings of a ship. A single row of brass cannon protruded from her open ports, and dashed from the polished surfaces the fires of innumerable battle-lanterns which swung to and fro about her rigging. But what mainly inspired us with horror and astonishment, was that she bore up under a press of sail in the very teeth of that supernatural sea, and of that ungovernable hurricane. When we first discovered her, her bows were alone to be seen, as she rose slowly from the dim and horrible gulf beyond her. For a moment of intense terror she paused upon the giddy pinnacle as if in contemplation of her own sublimity, then trembled, and tottered, and—came down.

At this instant, I know not what sudden self-possession came over my spirit. Staggering as far aft as I could, I awaited fearlessly the ruin that was to overwhelm. Our own vessel was at length ceasing from her struggles, and sinking with her head to the sea. The shock of the descending mass struck her, consequently, in that portion of

her frame which was nearly under water, and the inevitable result was to hurl me, with irresistible violence, upon the rigging of the stranger.

As I fell, the ship hove in stays, and went about; and to the confusion ensuing I attributed my escape from the notice of the crew. With little difficulty I made my way, unperceived, to the main hatchway, which was partially open, and soon found an opportunity of secreting myself in the hold. Why I did so I can hardly tell. An indefinite sense of awe, which at first sight of the navigators of the ship had taken hold of my mind, was perhaps the principle of my concealment. I was unwilling to trust myself with a race of people who had offered, to the cursory glance I had taken, so many points of vague novelty, doubt, and apprehension. I therefore thought proper to contrive a hiding-place in the hold. This I did by removing a small portion of the shifting-boards, in such a manner as to afford me a convenient retreat between the huge timbers of the ship.

I had scarcely completed my work, when a footstep in the hold forced me to make use of it. A man passed by my place of concealment with a feeble and unsteady gait. I could not see his face, but had an opportunity of observing his general appearance. There was about it an evidence of great age and infirmity. His knees tottered beneath a load of years, and his entire frame quivered under the burden. He muttered to himself, in a low, broken tone, some words of a language which I could not understand, and groped in a corner among a pile of singular-looking instruments and decayed charts of navigation. His manner was a wild mixture of the peevishness of second childhood and the solemn dignity of a god. He at length went on deck, and I saw him no more.

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A feeling, for which I have no name, has taken possession of my soul—a sensation which will admit of no analysis, to which the lessons of bygone time are inadequate, and for which I fear futurity itself will offer me no key. To a mind constituted like my own, the latter consideration is an evil. I shall never—I know that I shall never—be satisfied with regard to the nature of my conceptions. Yet it is not wonderful that these conceptions are indefinite, since they have their origin in sources so utterly novel. A new sense—a new entity is added to my soul.

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It is long since I first trod the deck of this terrible ship, and the rays of my destiny are, I think, gathering to a focus. Incomprehensible men! Wrapped up in meditations of a kind which I cannot define, they pass me by unnoticed. Concealment is utter folly on my part, for the people *will not see*. It is but just now that I passed directly before the eyes of the mate; it was no long while ago that I ventured into the captain's own private cabin, and took thence the materials with which I write, and have written. I shall from time to time continue this journal. It is true that I may not find an opportunity of transmitting it to the world, but I will not fail to make the endeavour. At the last moment I will enclose the MS. in a bottle, and cast it within the sea.

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An incident has occurred which has given me new room for meditation. Are such things the operation of ungoverned chance? I had ventured upon deck and thrown myself down, without attracting any notice, among a pile of ratlin-stuff and old sails, in the bottom of the yawl. While musing upon the singularity of my fate, I unwittingly daubed with a tar-brush the edges of a neatly-folded studding-sail which lay near me on a barrel. The studding-sail is now bent upon the ship, and the thoughtless touches of the brush are spread out into the word DISCOVERY.

I have made my observations lately upon the structure of the vessel. Although well armed, she is not, I think, a ship of war. Her rigging, build, and general equipment, all negative a supposition of this kind. What she *is not*, I can easily perceive; what she *is*, I fear it is impossible to say. I know not how it is, but in scrutinising her strange model and singular cast of spars, her huge size and overgrown suits of canvas, her severely simple bow and antiquated stern, there will occasionally flash across my mind a sensation of familiar things, and there is always mixed up with such indistinct shadows of recollection, an unaccountable memory of old foreign chronicles and ages long ago.

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I have been looking at the timbers of the ship. She is built of a material to which I am a stranger. There is a peculiar character about the wood which strikes me as rendering it unfit for the purpose to which it has been applied. I mean its extreme *porousness*, considered independently of the worm-eaten condition which is a consequence of

navigation in these seas, and apart from the rottenness attendant upon age. It will appear perhaps an observation somewhat over-curious, but this wood would have every characteristic of Spanish oak, if Spanish oak were distended by any unnatural means.

In reading the above sentence, a curious apophthegm of an old weather-beaten Dutch navigator comes full upon my recollection. "It is as sure," he was wont to say, when any doubt was entertained of his veracity, "as sure as there is a sea where the ship itself will grow in bulk like the living body of the seaman."

. . . . . .

About an hour ago, I made bold to trust myself among a group of the crew. They paid me no manner of attention, and, although I stood in the very midst of them all, seemed utterly unconscious of my presence. Like the one I had at first seen in the hold, they all bore about them the marks of a hoary old age. Their knees trembled with infirmity; their shoulders were bent double with decrepitude; their shrivelled skins rattled in the wind; their voices were low, tremulous, and broken; their eyes glistened with the rheum of years; and their gray hairs streamed terribly in the tempest. Around them, on every part of the deck, lay scattered mathematical instruments of the most quaint and obsolete construction.

. . . . . .

I mentioned, some time ago, the bending of a studding-sail. From that period, the ship, being thrown dead off the wind, has continued her terrific course due south, with every rag of canvas packed upon her, from her truck to her lower-studding-sail booms, and rolling every moment her topgallant yard-arms into the most appalling hell of water which it can enter into the mind of man to imagine. I have just left the deck, where I found it impossible to maintain a footing, although the crew seem to experience little inconvenience. It appears to me a miracle of miracles that our enormous bulk is not swallowed up at once and for ever. We are surely doomed to hover continually upon the brink of eternity, without taking a final plunge into the abyss. From billows a thousand times more stupendous than any I have ever seen, we glide away with the facility of the arrowy sea-gull; and the colossal waters rear their heads above us like demons of the deep, but like demons confined to simple threats, and forbidden to destroy. I am led to attribute these frequent escapes to the only natural cause which

can account for such effect. I must suppose the ship to be within the influence of some strong current, or impetuous undertow.

. . . . . .

I have seen the captain face to face, and in his own cabin—but, as I expected, he paid me no attention. Although in his appearance there is, to a casual observer, nothing which might bespeak him more or less than man, still, a feeling of irrepressible reverence and awe, mingled with the sensation of wonder with which I regarded him. In stature, he is nearly my own height; that is, about five feet eight inches. He is of a well-knit and compact frame of body, neither robust nor remarkably otherwise. But it is the singularity of the expression which reigns upon the face—it is the intense, the wonderful, the thrilling evidence of old age so utter, so extreme, which excites within my spirit a sense—a sentiment ineffable. His forehead, although little wrinkled, seems to bear upon it the stamp of a myriad of years. His gray hairs are records of the past, and his grayer eyes are sybils of the future. The cabin floor was thickly strewn with strange, iron-clasped folios, and mouldering instruments of science, and obsolete long-forgotten charts. His head was bowed down upon his hands, and he pored, with a fiery, unquiet eye, over a paper which I took to be a commission, and which, at all events, bore the signature of a monarch. He murmured to himself—as did the first seaman whom I saw in the hold—some low peevish syllables of a foreign tongue; and although the speaker was close at my elbow, his voice seemed to reach my ears from the distance of a mile.

. . . . . .

The ship and all in it are imbued with the spirit of Eld. The crew glide to and fro like the ghosts of buried centuries; their eyes have an eager and uneasy meaning; and when their figures fall athwart my path in the wild glare of the battle-lanterns, I feel as I have never felt before, although I have been all my life a dealer in antiquities, and have imbibed the shadows of fallen columns at Baalbek, and Tadmor, and Persepolis, until my very soul has become a ruin.

. . . . . .

When I look around me, I feel ashamed of my former apprehension. If I trembled at the blast which has hitherto attended us, shall I not stand aghast at a warring of wind and ocean, to convey any idea of which the words tornado and simoon are trivial and ineffective? All

in the immediate vicinity of the ship is the blackness of eternal night, and a chaos of foamless water; but, about a league on either side of us, may be seen, indistinctly and at intervals, stupendous ramparts of ice, towering away into the desolate sky, and looking like the walls of the universe.

. . . . . .

As I imagined, the ship proves to be in a current—if that appellation can properly be given to a tide which, howling and shrieking by the white ice, thunders on to the southward with a velocity like the headlong dashing of a cataract.

. . . . . .

To conceive the horror of my sensations is, I presume, utterly impossible; yet a curiosity to penetrate the mysteries of these awful regions predominates even over my despair, and will reconcile me to the most hideous aspect of death. It is evident that we are hurrying onward to some exciting knowledge—some never-to-be-imparted secret, whose attainment is destruction. Perhaps this current leads us to the Southern Pole itself. It must be confessed that a supposition apparently so wild has every probability in its favour.

The crew pace the deck with unquiet and tremulous step; but there is upon their countenance and expression more of the eagerness of hope than the apathy of despair.

In the meantime the wind is still in our poop, and, as we carry a crowd of canvas, the ship is at times lifted bodily from out the sea! Oh, horror upon horror!—the ice opens suddenly to the right, and to the left, and we are whirling dizzily, in immense concentric circles, round and round the borders of a gigantic amphitheatre, the summit of whose walls is lost in the darkness and the distance. But little time will be left me to ponder upon my destiny! The circles rapidly grow small—we are plunging madly within the grasp of the whirlpool—and amid a roaring, and bellowing, and thundering of ocean and tempest, the ship is quivering—O God! and—going down! . . .

Note.—The *MS. Found in a Bottle* was originally published in 1831, and it was not until many years afterward that I became acquainted with the maps of Mercator, in which the ocean is represented as rushing, by four mouths, into the (northern) Polar Gulf, to be absorbed into the bowels of the earth; the Pole itself being represented by a black rock, towering to a prodigious height.

The Wreck

BY GUY DE MAUPASSANT

(*1850-1893*)

It was yesterday, the 31st of December.

I had just finished breakfast with my old friend Georges Garin when the servant handed him a letter covered with seals and foreign stamps.

Georges said:

"Will you excuse me?"

"Certainly."

And so he began to read the letter, which was written in a large English handwriting, crossed and re-crossed in every direction. He read them slowly, with serious attention and the interest which we only pay to things that touch our hearts.

Then he put the letter on the mantel-piece and said:

"That was a curious story! I've never told you about it, I think. Yet it was a sentimental adventure, and it really happened to me. That was a strange New Year's Day indeed! It must have been twenty years ago, since I was then thirty, and am now fifty years old.

"I was then an inspector in the Maritime Insurance Company, of which I am now director. I had arranged to pass the *fête* of New Year's in Paris—since it is a convention to make that day a *fête*—when I received a letter from the manager, asking me to proceed at once to the island of Ré, where a three-masted vessel from Saint-Nazaire, insured by us, had just been driven ashore. It was then eight o'clock in the morning. I arrived at the office at ten, to get my advices, and that evening I took the express, which put me down in La Rochelle the next day, the thirty-first of December.

"I had two hours to wait before going aboard the boat for Ré. So I made a tour in the town. It is certainly a fantastic city, La Rochelle, with a strong character of its own—streets tangled like a labyrinth,

sidewalks running under endless arcaded galleries like those of the Rue de Rivoli, but low, mysterious, built as if to form a fit scene for conspirators, and making an ancient and striking background for those old-time wars, the savage heroic wars of religion. It is indeed the typical old Huguenot city, conservative, discreet, with no fine art to show, with no wonderful monuments, such as make Rouen; but it is remarkable for its severe, somewhat cunning look; it is a city of obstinate fighters, a city where fanaticisms might well blossom, where the faith of the Calvinists became exalted, and which gave birth to the plot of the 'Four Sergeants.'

"After I had wandered for some time about these curious streets, I went aboard the black, rotund little steamboat which was to take me to the island of Ré. It was called the *Jean Guiton.* It started with angry puffings, passed between the two old towers which guard the harbor, crossed the roadstead, and issued from the mole built by Richelieu, the great stones of which can be seen at the water's edge, enclosing the town like a great necklace. Then the steamboat turned to the right.

"It was one of those sad days which give one the blues, tighten the heart and kill in us all energy and force—a gray, cold day, with a heavy mist which was as wet as rain, as cold as frost, as bad to breathe as the mist of a wash-tub.

"Under this low ceiling of sinister fog, the shallow, yellow, sandy sea of all gradually receding coasts lay without a wrinkle, without a movement, without life, a sea of turbid water, of greasy water, of stagnant water. The *Jean Guiton* passed over it, rolling a little from habit, dividing the smooth, dark blue water, and leaving behind a few waves, a little chopping sea, a few big waves, which were soon calm.

"I began to talk to the captain, a little man with small feet, as round as his boat and balancing himself like it. I wanted some details about the disaster on which I was to give a report. A great square-rigged three-master, the *Marie Joseph,* of Saint-Nazaire, had gone ashore one night in a hurricane on the sands of the island of Ré.

"The owner wrote us that the storm had thrown the ship so far ashore that it was impossible to float her, and that they had to remove everything which could be detached, with the utmost possible haste. Nevertheless, I must examine the situation of the wreck, estimate what must have been her condition before the disaster, and decide whether

all efforts had been used to get her afloat. I came as an agent of the company in order to give contradictory testimony, if necessary, at the trial.

"On receipt of my report, the manager would take what measures he might think necessary to protect our interests.

"The captain of the *Jean Guiton* knew all about the affair, having been summoned with his boat to assist in the attempts at salvage.

"He told me the story of the disaster. The *Marie Joseph,* driven by a furious gale, lost her bearings completely, in the night, and steering by chance over a heavy foaming sea—'a milk-soup sea,' said the captain—had gone ashore on those immense banks of sand which make the coasts of this country seem like limitless Saharas at hours when the tide is low.

"While talking I looked around and ahead. Between the ocean and the lowering sky lay a free space where the eye could see far. We were following a coast. I asked:

" 'Is that the island of Ré?'

" 'Yes, sir.'

"And suddenly the captain stretched his right hand out before us, pointed to something almost invisible in the middle of the sea, and said:

" 'There's your ship!'

" 'The *Marie Joseph?*'

" 'Yes.'

"I was stupefied. This black, almost imperceptible speck, which looked to me like a rock, seemed at least three miles from land.

"I continued:

" 'But, captain, there must be a hundred fathoms of water in that place.'

"He began to laugh.

" 'A hundred fathoms, my child! Well, I should say about two!'

"He was from Bordeaux. He continued:

" 'It's now nine-forty, just high tide. Go down along the beach with your hands in your pockets after you've had lunch at the Hôtel du Dauphin, and I'll wager that at ten minutes to three, or three o'clock, you'll reach the wreck without wetting your feet, and have from an hour and three-quarters to two hours aboard of her; but not more, or you'll be caught. The faster the sea goes out the faster it

comes back. This coast is as flat as a turtle! But start away at ten minutes to five, as I tell you, and at half-past seven you will be aboard of the *Jean Guiton* again, which will put you down this same evening on the quay at La Rochelle.'

"I thanked the captain, and I went and sat down in the bow of the steamer to get a good look at the little city of Saint-Martin, which we were now rapidly drawing near.

"It was just like all small seaports which serve as the capitals of the barren islands scattered along the coast—a large fishing village, one foot on sea and one on shore, living on fish and wild-fowl, vegetables and shell-fish, radishes and mussels. The island is very low, and little cultivated, yet it seems to be thickly populated. However, I did not penetrate into the interior.

"After breakfast I climbed across a little promontory, and then, as the tide was rapidly falling, I started out across the sands towards a kind of black rock which I could just perceive above the surface of the water, out a considerable distance.

"I walked quickly over the yellow plain; it was elastic, like flesh, and seemed to sweat beneath my foot. The sea had been there very lately; now I perceived it at a distance, escaping out of sight, and I no longer could distinguish the line which separated the sands from ocean. I felt as though I were assisting at a gigantic supernatural work of enchantment. The Atlantic had just now been before me, then it had disappeared into the strand, just as does scenery through a trap; and I now walked in the midst of a desert. Only the feeling, the breath of the salt-water, remained in me. I perceived the smell of the wreck, the smell of the wide sea, the good smell of sea-coasts. I walked fast; I was no longer cold; I looked at the stranded wreck, which grew in size as I approached, and came now to resemble an enormous shipwrecked whale.

"It seemed fairly to rise out of the ground, and on that great, flat, yellow stretch of sand assumed wonderful proportions. After an hour's walk I at last reached it. Bulging out and crushed, it lay upon its side, which, like the flanks of an animal, displayed its broken bones, its bones of tarry wood pierced with great bolts. The sand had already invaded it, entering it by all the crannies, and held it, and refused to let it go. It seemed to have taken root in it. The bow had entered deep into this soft, treacherous beach; while the stern, high in

air, seemed to cast at heaven, like a cry of despairing appeal, the two white words on the black planking, *Marie Joseph.*

"I climbed upon this carcass of a ship by the lowest side; then, having reached the deck, I went below. The daylight, which entered by the stove-in hatches and the cracks in the sides, showed me a long somber cellar full of demolished woodwork. There was nothing here but the sand, which served as foot-soil in this cavern of planks.

"I began to take some notes about the condition of the ship. I was seated on a broken empty cask, writing by the light of a great crack, through which I could perceive the boundless stretch of the strand. A strange shivering of cold and loneliness ran over my skin from time to time; and I would often stop writing for a moment to listen to the mysterious noises: the noise of the crabs scratching the planking with their crooked claws; the noise of a thousand little creatures of the sea already crawling over this dead body.

"Suddenly, very near to me, I heard human voices; I started as though I had seen a ghost. For a second I really thought I was about to see drowned men rise from the sinister depths of the hold, who would tell me about their death. At any rate, it did not take me long to swing myself on deck. There, below the bow, I found standing a tall Englishman with three young girls. Certainly, they were a good deal more frightened at seeing this sudden apparition on the abandoned three-master than I had been at seeing them. The youngest girl turned round and ran; the two others caught their father by the arms; as for him, he opened his mouth—that was the only sign of his emotion which he showed.

"Then, after several seconds, he spoke:

" 'Môsieu, are you the owner of this ship?'

" 'I am.'

" 'May I go over it?'

" 'You may.'

"Then he uttered a long sentence in English, in which I only distinguished the word 'gracious,' repeated several times.

"As he was looking for a place to climb up, I showed him the best, and gave him a hand. He ascended. Then we helped up the three little girls, who had now quite recovered their composure. They were charming, especially the oldest, a blonde of eighteen, fresh as a flower, and very dainty and pretty! Ah yes! the pretty Englishwomen have

indeed the look of tender fruits of the sea. One would have said of this one that she had just risen from the sands and that her hair had kept their tint. They all, with their exquisite freshness, make you think of the delicate colors of pink sea-shells, and of shining pearls hidden in the unknown depths of the ocean.

"She spoke French a little better than her father, and she acted as interpreter. I must tell all about the shipwreck, and I romanced as though I had been present at the catastrophe. Then the whole family descended into the interior of the wreck. As soon as they had penetrated into this somber, dim-lit gallery, they uttered cries of astonishment and admiration. Suddenly the father and his three daughters were holding sketch-books in their hands, which they had doubtless carried hidden somewhere in their heavy weather-proof clothes, and were all beginning at once to make pencil sketches of the melancholy and fantastic place.

"They had seated themselves side by side on a projecting beam, and the four sketch-books on the eight knees were being rapidly covered with little black lines which were intended to represent the half-opened hulk of the *Marie Joseph*.

"I continued to inspect the skeleton of the ship, and the oldest girl talked to me while she worked.

"They had none of the usual English arrogance; they were simple honest hearts of that class of constant travelers with which England covers the globe. The father was long and thin, with a red face framed in white whiskers, and looking like a living sandwich, placed between two wedges of hair. The daughters, like little wading-birds in embryo, had long legs and were also thin—except the oldest. All three were pretty, especially the tallest.

"She had such a droll way of speaking, of laughing, of understanding and of not understanding, of raising her eyes to ask a question (eyes blue as the deep ocean), of stopping her drawing a moment to make a guess at what you meant, of returning once more to work, of saying 'yes' or 'no'—that I could have listened and looked indefinitely.

"Suddenly she murmured:

" 'I hear a little movement on this boat.'

"I lent an ear; and I immediately distinguished a low, steady, curious sound. I rose and looked out of the crack, and I uttered a violent cry. The sea had come back; it had already surrounded us!

"We were on deck in an instant. It was too late. The water circled us about, and was running towards the coast with awful swiftness. No, it did not run, it raced, it grew longer, like a kind of great limitless blot. The water on the sands was barely a few centimeters deep; but the rising flood had gone so far that we no longer saw the flying line of its edge.

"The Englishman wanted to jump. I held him back. Flight was impossible because of the deep places which we had been obliged to go round on our way out, and through which we could not pass on our return.

"There was a minute of horrible anguish in our hearts. Then the little English girl began to smile, and murmured:

" 'So we too are shipwrecked.'

"I tried to laugh; but fear caught me tight, a fear which was cowardly and horrid and base and mean, like the tide. All the dangers which we ran appeared to me at once. I wanted to shriek 'Help!' But to whom?

"The two younger girls were clinging to their father, who regarded, with a look of consternation, the measureless sea which hedged us round about.

"The night fell as swiftly as the ocean rose—a lowering, wet, icy night.

"I said:

" 'There's nothing to do but to stay on the ship.'

"The Englishman answered:

" 'Oh, yes!'

"And we waited there a quarter of an hour, half an hour, indeed I don't know how long, watching that creeping water which grew deep about us, whirled round and round the wreck.

"One of the little girls was cold, and we went below to shelter ourselves from the light but freezing wind which blew upon us and pricked our skins.

"I leaned over the hatchway. The ship was full of water. So we must cower against the stern planking, which shielded us a little.

"The shades were now enwrapping us, and we remained pressed close to one another. I felt trembling against my shoulder the shoulder of the little English girl, whose teeth chattered from time to time. But I also felt the gentle warmth of her body through her ulster, and that

warmth was as delicious to me as a kiss. We no longer spoke; we sat motionless, mute, cowering down like animals in a ditch when a hurricane is raging. And, nevertheless, despite the night, despite the terrible and increasing danger, I began to feel happy that I was there, glad of the cold and the peril, to rejoice in the long hours of darkness and anguish which I must pass on this plank so near this dainty and pretty little girl.

"I asked myself, 'Why this strange sensation of well-being and of joy?'

"Why! Does one know? Because she was there? Who? She, a little unknown English girl? I did not love her, I did not even know her. And for all that I was touched and conquered. I wanted to save her, to sacrifice myself for her, to commit a thousand follies! Strange thing! How does it happen that the presence of a woman overwhelms us so? Is it the power of her grace which infolds us? Is it the seduction in her beauty and youth, which intoxicates one like wine?

"Is it not rather the touch of Love, of Love the Mysterious, who seeks constantly to unite two beings, who tries his strength the instant he has put a man and a woman face to face?

"The silence of the shades and of the sky became dreadful, because we could thus hear vaguely about us an infinite low roar, the dull sound of the rising sea, and the monotonous dashing of the waves against the ship.

"Suddenly I heard the sound of sobs. The youngest of the little girls was crying. Her father tried to console her, and they began to talk in their own tongue, which I did not understand. I guessed that he was reassuring her, and that she was still afraid.

"I asked my neighbor:

" 'You are not too cold, are you, Mademoiselle?'

" 'Oh, yes. I am very cold.'

"I offered to give her my cloak; she refused it. But I had taken it off, and I covered her with it against her will. In the short struggle her hand touched mine. It made a charming shiver run over my body.

"For some minutes the air had been growing brisker, the dashing of the water stronger against the flanks of the ship. I raised myself; a great gust of wind blew in my face. The wind was rising!

"The Englishman perceived this at the same time that I did, and said, simply:

" 'This is bad for us, this—'

"Of course it was bad, it was certain death if any breakers, however feeble, should attack and shake the wreck, which was already so loose and broken that the first big sea would carry it off.

"So our anguish increased momentarily as the squalls grew stronger and stronger. Now the sea broke a little, and I saw in the darkness white lines appearing and disappearing, which were lines of foam; while each wave struck the *Marie Joseph,* and shook her with a short quiver which rose to our hearts.

"The English girl was trembling; I felt her shiver against me. And I had a wild desire to take her in my arms.

"Down there before and behind us, to left and right, light-houses were shining along the shore—light-houses white and yellow and red, revolving like the enormous eyes of giants who were staring at us, watching us, waiting eagerly for us to disappear. One of them in especial irritated me. It went out every thirty seconds and it lit up again as soon. It was indeed an eye, that one, with its lid ceaselessly lowered over its fiery look.

"From time to time the Englishman struck a match to see the hour; then he put his watch back in his pocket. Suddenly he said to me, over the heads of his daughters, with a gravity which was awful:

" 'I wish you a Happy New Year, Môsieu.'

"It was midnight. I held out my hand, which he pressed. Then he said something in English, and suddenly he and his daughters began to sing 'God save the Queen,' which rose through the black and silent air and vanquished into space.

"At first I felt a desire to laugh; then I was seized by a strong, fantastic emotion.

"It was something sinister and superb, this chant of the shipwrecked, the condemned, something like a prayer, and also like something grander, something comparable to the ancient *'Ave Cæsar morituri te salutamus.'*

"When they had finished I asked my neighbor to sing a ballad alone, anything she liked, to make us forget our terrors. She consented, and immediately her clear young voice rang out into the night. She sang something which was doubtless sad, because the notes were long drawn out, and hovered, like wounded birds, above the waves.

"The sea was rising now and beating upon our wreck. As for me,

I thought only of that voice. And I thought also of the sirens. If a ship had passed nearby us what would the sailors have said? My troubled spirit lost itself in the dream! A siren! Was she not really a siren, this daughter of the sea, who had kept me on this worm-eaten ship, and who was soon about to go down with me deep into the waters?

"But suddenly we were all five rolling on the deck, because the *Marie Joseph* had sunk on her right side. The English girl had fallen upon me, and before I knew what I was doing, thinking that my last moment was come, I had caught her in my arms and kissed her cheek, her temple, and her hair.

"The ship did not move again, and we, we also, remained motionless.

"The father said, 'Kate!' The one whom I was holding answered, 'Yes,' and made a movement to free herself. And at that moment I should have wished the ship to split in two and let me fall with her into the sea.

"The Englishman continued:

"'A little rocking; it's nothing. I have my three daughters safe.'

"Not having seen the oldest, he had thought she was lost overboard!

"I rose slowly, and suddenly I made out a light on the sea quite near us. I shouted; they answered. It was a boat sent out in search of us by the hotel-keeper, who had guessed at our imprudence.

"We were saved. I was in despair. They picked us up off our raft, and they brought us back to Saint-Martin.

"The Englishman began to rub his hands and murmur:

"'A good supper! A good supper!'

"We did sup. I was not gay. I regretted the *Marie Joseph.*

"We had to separate the next day after much handshaking and many promises to write. They departed for Biarritz. I wanted to follow them.

"I was hard hit; I wanted to ask this little girl to marry me. If we had passed eight days together, I should have done so! How weak and incomprehensible a man sometimes is!

"Two years passed without my hearing a word from them. Then I received a letter from New York. She was married, and wrote to tell me. And since then we write to each other every year, on New Year's Day. She tells me about her life, talks of her children, her sisters, never of her husband! Why? Ah! why? . . . And as for me I only talk of the *Marie Joseph.* That was perhaps the only woman I have

ever loved. No—that I ever should have loved. . . . Ah, well! who can tell? Facts master you. . . . And then—and then—all passes. . . . She must be old now; I should not know her. . . . Ah! she of the by-gone time, she of the wreck! What a creature! . . . Divine! She writes me her hair is white. . . . That caused me terrible pain. . . . Ah! her yellow hair. . . . No, *my* English girl exists no longer. . . . They are sad, such things as that!"

Dr. Manette's Manuscript

BY CHARLES DICKENS

(*1812-1870*)

I, ALEXANDRE MANETTE, unfortunate physician, native of Beauvais, and afterwards resident in Paris, write this melancholy paper in my doleful cell in the Bastille, during the last month of the year, 1767. I write it at stolen intervals, under every difficulty. I design to secrete it in the wall of the chimney, where I have slowly and laboriously made a place of concealment for it. Some pitying hand may find it there, when I and my sorrows are dust.

"These words are formed by the rusty iron point with which I write with difficulty in scrapings of soot and charcoal from the chimney, mixed with blood, and in the last month of the tenth year of my captivity. Hope has quite departed from my breast. I know from terrible warnings I have noted in myself that my reason will not long remain unimpaired, but I solemnly declare that I am at this time in the possession of my right mind—that my memory is exact and circumstantial—and that I write the truth as I shall answer for these my last recorded words, whether they be ever read by men or not, at the Eternal Judgment-seat.

"One cloudy moonlight night in the third week of December (I think the twenty-second of the month) in the year 1757, I was walking on a retired part of the quay by the Seine for the refreshment of the frosty air, at an hour's distance from my place of residence in the Street of the School of Medicine, when a carriage came along behind me, driven very fast. As I stood aside to let that carriage pass, apprehensive that it might otherwise run me down, a head was put out at the window, and a voice called to the driver to stop.

"The carriage stopped as soon as the driver could rein in his horses, and the same voice called to me by my name. I answered. The carriage was then so far in advance of me that two gentlemen had

time to open the door and alight before I came up with it. I observed that they were both wrapped in cloaks, and appeared to conceal themselves. As they stood side by side near the carriage door, I also observed that they both looked of about my own age, or rather younger, and that they were greatly alike, in stature, manner, voice, and (as far as I could see) face too.

"'You are Doctor Manette?' said one.

"'I am.'

"'Doctor Manette, formerly of Beauvais,' said the other; 'the young physician, originally an expert surgeon, who within the last year or two has made a rising reputation in Paris?'

"'Gentlemen,' I returned, 'I am that Doctor Manette of whom you speak so graciously.'

"'We have been to your residence,' said the first, 'and not being so fortunate as to find you there, and being informed that you were probably walking in this direction, we followed, in the hope of overtaking you. Will you please to enter the carriage?'

"The manner of both was imperious, and they both moved, as these words were spoken, so as to place me between themselves and the carriage door. They were armed. I was not.

"'Gentlemen,' said I, 'pardon me; but I usually inquire who does me the honour to seek my assistance, and what is the nature of the case to which I am summoned.'

"The reply to this was made by him who had spoken second. 'Doctor, your clients are people of condition. As to the nature of the case, our confidence in your skill assures us that you will ascertain it for yourself better than we can describe it. Enough. Will you please to enter the carriage?'

"I could do nothing but comply, and I entered it in silence. They both entered after me—the last springing in, after putting up the steps. The carriage turned about, and drove on at its former speed.

"I repeat this conversation exactly as it occurred. I have no doubt that it is, word for word, the same. I describe everything exactly as it took place, constraining my mind not to wander from the task. Where I make the broken marks that follow here, I leave off for the time, and put my paper in its hiding-place. . . .

"The carriage left the streets behind, passed the North Barrier, and emerged upon the country road. At two-thirds of a league from the

Barrier—I did not estimate the distance at that time, but afterwards when I traversed it—it struck out of the main avenue, and presently stopped at a solitary house. We all three alighted, and walked, by a damp soft footpath, in a garden where a neglected fountain had overflowed to the door of the house. It was not opened immediately, in answer to the ringing of the bell, and one of my two conductors struck the man who opened it, with his heavy riding glove, across the face.

"There was nothing in this action to attract my particular attention, for I had seen common people struck more commonly than dogs. But the other of the two, being angry likewise, struck the man in like manner with his arm; the look and bearing of the brothers were then so exactly alike that I then first perceived them to be twin brothers.

"From the time of our alighting at the outer gate (which we found locked, and which one of the brothers had opened to admit us, and had relocked), I had heard cries proceeding from an upper chamber. I was conducted to this chamber straight, the cries growing louder as we ascended the stairs, and I found a patient in a high fever of the brain, lying on a bed.

"The patient was a woman of great beauty, and young; assuredly not much past twenty. Her hair was torn and ragged, and her arms were bound to her sides with sashes and handkerchiefs. I noticed that these bonds were all portions of a gentleman's dress. On one of them, which was a fringed scarf for a dress of ceremony, I saw the armorial bearings of a Noble, and the letter E.

"I saw this within the first minute of my contemplation of the patient; for, in her restless strivings she had turned over on her face on the edge of the bed, had drawn the end of the scarf into her mouth, and was in danger of suffocation. My first act was to put out my hand to relieve her breathing; and, in moving the scarf aside, the embroidery in the corner caught my sight.

"I turned her gently over, placed my hands upon her breast to calm her and keep her down, and looked into her face. Her eyes were dilated and wild, and she constantly uttered piercing shrieks, and repeated the words, 'My husband, my father, and my brother!' and then counted up to twelve, and said, 'Hush!' For an instant, and no more, she would pause to listen, and then the piercing shrieks would begin again and she would repeat the cry, 'My husband, my father, and my brother!' and would count up to twelve, and say, 'Hush!' There was

no variation in the order, or the manner. There was no cessation, but the regular moment's pause, in the utterance of these sounds.

" 'How long,' I asked, 'has this lasted?'

"To distinguish the brothers, I will call them the elder and the younger; by the elder, I mean him who exercised the most authority. It was the elder who replied, 'Since about this hour last night.'

" 'She has a husband, a father, and a brother?'

" 'A brother.'

" 'I do not address her brother?'

"He answered with great contempt, 'No.'

" 'She has some recent association with the number twelve?'

"The younger brother impatiently rejoined, 'With twelve o'clock?'

" 'See, gentlemen,' said I, still keeping my hands upon her breast, 'how useless I am, as you have brought me! If I had known what I was coming to see, I could have come provided. As it is, time must be lost. There are no medicines to be obtained in this lonely place.'

"The elder brother looked to the younger, who said haughtily, 'There is a case of medicines here'; and brought it from a closet, and put it on the table. * * * *

"I opened some of the bottles, smelt them, and put the stoppers to my lips. If I had wanted to use anything save narcotic medicines that were poisons in themselves, I would not have administered any of those.

" 'Do you doubt them?' asked the younger brother.

" 'You see, monsieur, I am going to use them,' I replied, and said no more.

"I made the patient swallow, with great difficulty, and after many efforts, the dose that I desired to give. As I intended to repeat it after a while, and as it was necessary to watch its influence, I then sat down by the side of the bed. There was a timid and suppressed woman in attendance (wife of the man down-stairs), who had retreated into a corner. The house was damp and decayed, indifferently furnished—evidently, recently occupied and temporarily used. Some thick old hangings had been nailed up before the windows, to deaden the sound of the shrieks. They continued to be uttered in their regular succession, with the cry, 'My husband, my father, and my brother!' the counting up to twelve, and 'Hush!' The frenzy was so violent,

that I had not unfastened the bandages restraining the arms; but I had looked to them, to see that they were not painful. The only spark of encouragement in the case was, that my hand upon the sufferer's breast had this much soothing influence, that for minutes at a time it tranquillised the figure. It had no effect upon the cries; no pendulum could be more regular.

"For the reason that my hand had this effect (I assume), I had sat by the side of the bed for half an hour, with the two brothers looking on, before the elder said:

" 'There is another patient.'

"I was startled, and asked, 'Is it a pressing case?'

" 'You had better see,' he carelessly answered; and took up a light. * * * *

"The other patient lay in a back room across a second staircase, which was a species of loft over a stable. There was a low plastered ceiling to a part of it; the rest was open, to the ridge of the tiled roof, and there were beams across. Hay and straw were stored in that portion of the place, fagots for firing, and a heap of apples in sand. I had to pass through that part, to get at the other. My memory is circumstantial and unshaken. I try it with these details, and I see them all, in this my cell in the Bastille, near the close of the tenth year of my captivity, as I saw them all that night.

"On some hay on the ground, with a cushion thrown under his head, lay a handsome peasant boy—a boy of not more than seventeen at the most. He lay on his back, with his teeth set, his right hand clenched on his breast, and his glaring eyes looking straight upward. I could not see where his wound was, as I kneeled on one knee over him; but, I could see that he was dying of a wound from a sharp point.

" 'I am a doctor, my poor fellow,' said I. 'Let me examine it.'

" 'I do not want it examined,' he answered; 'let it be.'

"It was under his hand, and I soothed him to let me move his hand away. The wound was a sword-thrust, received from twenty to twenty-four hours before, but no skill could have saved him if it had been looked to without delay. He was then dying fast. As I turned my eyes to the elder brother, I saw him looking down at this handsome boy whose life was ebbing out, as if he were a wounded bird, or hare, or rabbit; not at all as if he were a fellow-creature.

" 'How has this been done, monsieur?' said I.

" 'A crazed young common dog! A serf! Forced my brother to draw upon him, and has fallen by my brother's sword—like a gentleman.'

"There was no touch of pity, sorrow, or kindred humanity, in this answer. The speaker seemed to acknowledge that it was inconvenient to have that different order of creature dying there, and that it would have been better if he had died in the usual obscure routine of his vermin kind. He was quite incapable of any compassionate feeling about the boy, or about his fate.

"The boy's eyes had slowly moved to him as he had spoken, and they now slowly moved to me.

" 'Doctor, they are very proud, these Nobles; but we common dogs are proud too, sometimes. They plunder us, outrage us, beat us, kill us; but we have a little pride left, sometimes. She—have you seen her, Doctor?'

"The shrieks and the cries were audible there, though subdued by the distance. He referred to them, as if she were lying in our presence.

"I said, 'I have seen her.'

" 'She is my sister, Doctor. They have had their shameful rights, these Nobles, in the modesty and virtue of our sisters, many years, but we have had good girls among us. I know it, and have heard my father say so. She was a good girl. She was betrothed to a good young man, too: a tenant of his. We were all tenants of his—that man's who stands there. The other is his brother, the worst of a bad race.'

"It was with the greatest difficulty that the boy gathered bodily force to speak; but, his spirit spoke with a dreadful emphasis.

" 'We were so robbed by that man who stands there, as all we common dogs are by those superior Beings—taxed by him without mercy, obliged to work for him without pay, obliged to grind our corn at his mill, obliged to feed scores of his tame birds on our wretched crops, and forbidden for our lives to keep a single tame bird of our own, pillaged and plundered to that degree that when we chanced to have a bit of meat, we ate it in fear, with the door barred and the shutters closed, that his people should not see it and take it from us—I say, we were so robbed, and hunted, and were made so poor, that our father told us it was a dreadful thing to bring a child into the world, and that what we should most pray for, was, that our women might be barren and our miserable race die out!'

"I had never before seen the sense of being oppressed, bursting forth like a fire. I had supposed that it must be latent in the people somewhere; but, I had never seen it break out, until I saw it in the dying boy.

" 'Nevertheless, Doctor, my sister married. He was ailing at that time, poor fellow, and she married her lover, that she might tend and comfort him in our cottage—our dog-hut, as that man would call it. She had not been married many weeks, when that man's brother saw her and admired her, and asked that man to lend her to him—for what are husbands among us! He was willing enough, but my sister was good and virtuous, and hated his brother with a hatred as strong as mine. What did the two then, to persuade her husband to use his influence with her, to make her willing?'

"The boy's eyes, which had been fixed on mine, slowly turned to the looker-on, and I saw in the two faces that all he said was true. The two opposing kinds of pride confronting one another, I can see, even in this Bastille; the gentleman's, all negligent indifference; the peasant's, all trodden-down sentiment, and passionate revenge.

" 'You know, Doctor, that it is among the Rights of these Nobles to harness us common dogs to carts, and drive us. They so harnessed him and drove him. You know that it is among their Rights to keep us in their grounds all night, quieting the frogs, in order that their noble sleep may not be disturbed. They kept him out in the unwholesome mists at night, and ordered him back into harness in the day. But he was not persuaded. No! Taken out of harness one day at noon, to feed—if he could find food—he sobbed twelve times, once for every stroke of the bell, and died on her bosom.'

"Nothing human could have held life in the boy but his determination to tell all his wrong. He forced back the gathering shadows of death, as he forced his clenched right hand to remain clenched, and to cover his wound.

" 'Then, with that man's permission and even with his aid, his brother took her away; in spite of what I know she must have told his brother—and what that is, will not be long unknown to you, Doctor, if it is now—his brother took her away—for his pleasure and diversion, for a little while. I saw her pass me on the road. When I took the tidings home, our father's heart burst; he never spoke one of the words that filled it. I took my young sister (for I have another) to a place

beyond the reach of this man, and where, at least, she will never be his vassal. Then, I tracked the brother here, and last night climbed in—a common dog, but sword in hand.—Where is the loft window? It was somewhere here?'

"The room was darkening to his sight; the world was narrowing around him. I glanced about me, and saw that the hay and straw were trampled over the floor, as if there had been a struggle.

" 'She heard me, and ran in. I told her not to come near us till he was dead. He came in and first tossed me some pieces of money; then struck at me with a whip. But I, though a common dog, so struck at him as to make him draw. Let him break into as many pieces as he will, the sword that he stained with my common blood; he drew to defend himself—thrust at me with all his skill for his life.'

"My glance had fallen, but a few moments before, on the fragments of a broken sword, lying among the hay. That weapon was a gentleman's. In another place, lay an old sword that seemed to have been a soldier's.

" 'Now, lift me up, Doctor; lift me up. Where is he?'

" 'He is not here,' I said, supporting the boy, and thinking that he referred to the brother.

" 'He! Proud as these Nobles are, he is afraid to see me. Where is the man who was here? Turn my face to him.'

"I did so, raising the boy's head against my knee. But, invested for the moment with extraordinary power, he raised himself completely: obliging me to rise too, or I could not have still supported him.

" 'Marquis,' said the boy, turned to him with his eyes opened wide, and his right hand raised, 'in the days when all these things are to be answered for, I summon you and yours, to the last of your bad race, to answer for them. I mark this cross of blood upon you, as a sign that I do it. In the days when all these things are to be answered for, I summon your brother, the worst of the bad race, to answer for them separately. I mark this cross of blood upon him; as a sign that I do it.'

"Twice, he put his hand to the wound in his breast, and with his forefinger drew a cross in the air. He stood for an instant with the finger yet raised, and as it dropped, he dropped with it, and I laid him down dead. * * * *

"When I returned to the bedside of the young woman, I found her having in precisely the same order of continuity. I knew that this

might last for many hours, and that it would probably end in the silence of the grave.

"I repeated the medicines I had given her, and I sat at the side of the bed until the night was far advanced. She never abated the piercing quality of her shrieks, never stumbled in the distinctness or the order of her words. They were always 'My husband, my father, and my brother! One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve. Hush!'

"This lasted twenty-six hours from the time when I first saw her. I had come and gone twice, and was again sitting by her, when she began to falter. I did what little could be done to assist that opportunity, and by and by she sank into a lethargy, and lay like the dead.

"It was as if the wind and rain had lulled at last, after a long and fearful storm. I released her arms, and called the woman to assist me to compose her figure and the dress she had torn. It was then that I knew her condition to be that of one in whom the first expectations of being a mother have arisen; and it was then that I lost the little hope I had had of her.

" 'Is she dead?' asked the Marquis, whom I will still describe as the elder brother, coming booted into the room from his horse.—'Not dead,' said I; 'but like to die.'

" 'What strength there is in these common bodies!' he said, looking down at her with some curiosity.

" 'There is prodigious strength,' I answered him, 'in sorrow and despair.'

"He first laughed at my words, and then frowned at them. He moved a chair with his foot near to mine, ordered the woman away, and said in a subdued voice:

" 'Doctor, finding my brother in this difficulty with these hinds, I recommended that your aid should be invited. Your reputation is high, and, as a young man with your fortune to make, you are probably mindful of your interest. The things that you see here, are things to be seen, and not spoken of.'

"I listened to the patient's breathing, and avoided answering.—'Do you honour me with your attention, Doctor?'

" 'Monsieur,' said I, 'in my profession, the communications of patients are always received in confidence.' I was guarded in my answer, for I was troubled in my mind with what I had heard and seen.

"Her breathing was so difficult to trace, that I carefully tried the pulse and the heart. There was life, and no more. Looking round as I resumed my seat, I found both the brothers intent upon me. * * * *

"I write with so much difficulty, the cold is so severe, I am so fearful of being detected and consigned to an underground cell and total darkness, that I must abridge this narrative. There is no confusion of failure in my memory; it can recall, and could detail, every word that was ever spoken between me and those brothers.

"She lingered for a week. Towards the last, I could understand some few syllables that she said to me, by placing my ear close to her lips. She asked me where she was, and I told her; who I was, and I told her. It was in vain that I asked her for her family name. She faintly shook her head upon the pillow, and kept her secret, as the boy had done.

"I had no opportunity of asking her any question, until I had told the brothers she was sinking fast, and could not live another day. Until then, though no one was ever presented to her consciousness save the woman and myself, one or other of them had always jealously sat behind the curtain at the head of the bed when I was there. But when it came to that, they seemed careless what communication I might hold with her; as if—the thought passed through my mind—I were dying too.

"I always observed that their pride bitterly resented the younger brother's (as I call him) having crossed swords with a peasant, and that peasant a boy. The only consideration that appeared to affect the mind of either of them was the consideration that this was highly degrading to the family, and was ridiculous. As often as I caught the younger brother's eyes, their expression reminded me that he disliked me deeply, for knowing what I knew from the boy. He was smoother and more polite to me than the elder; but I saw this. I also saw that I was an incumbrance in the mind of the elder, too.

"My patient died, two hours before midnight—at a time, by my watch, answering almost to the minute when I had first seen her. I was alone with her, when her forlorn young head drooped gently on one side, and all her earthly wrongs and sorrows ended.

"The brothers were waiting in a room down-stairs, impatient to ride away. I had heard them, alone at the bed-side, striking their boots with their riding-whips, and loitering up and down.

"'At last she's dead?' said the elder, when I went in.

"'She is dead,' said I.

"'I congratulate you, my brother,' were his words as he turned round.

"He had before offered me money, which I had postponed taking. He now gave me a rouleau of gold. I took it from his hand, but laid it on the table. I had considered the question, and had resolved to accept nothing.

"'Pray excuse me,' said I. 'Under the circumstances, no.'

"They exchanged looks, but bent their heads to me as I bent mine to them, and we parted without another word on either side. * * * *

"I am weary, weary, weary—worn down by misery. I cannot read what I have written with this gaunt hand.

"Early in the morning, the rouleau of gold was left at my door in a little box, with my name on the outside. From the first, I had anxiously considered what I ought to do. I decided, that day, to write privately to the Minister, stating the nature of the two cases to which I had been summoned, and the place to which I had gone: in effect, stating all the circumstances. I knew what Court influence was, and what the immunities of the Nobles were, and I expected that the matter would never be heard of; but, I wished to relieve my own mind. I had kept the matter a profound secret even from my wife; and this, too, I resolved to state in my letter. I had no apprehension whatever of my real danger; but I was conscious that there might be danger for others, if others were compromised by possessing the knowledge that I possessed.

"I was much engaged that day, and could not complete my letter that night. I rose long before my usual time next morning to finish it. It was the last day of the year. The letter was lying before me just completed when I was told that a lady waited, who wished to see me. * * * *

"I am growing more and more unequal to the task I have set myself. It is so cold, so dark, my senses are so benumbed, and the gloom upon me is so dreadful.

"The lady was young, engaging, and handsome, but not marked for long life. She was in great agitation. She presented herself to me as the wife of the Marquis St. Evrémonde. I connected the title by which the boy had addressed the elder brother, with the initial letter em-

broidered on the scarf, and had no difficulty in arriving at the conclusion that I had seen that nobleman very lately.

"My memory is still accurate, but I cannot write the words of our conversation. I suspect that I am watched more closely than I was, and I know not at what times I may be watched. She had in part suspected, and in part discovered, the main facts of the cruel story, of her husband's share in it, and my being resorted to. She did not know that the girl was dead. Her hope had been, she said in great distress, to show her, in secret, a woman's sympathy. Her hope had been to avert the wrath of Heaven from a House that had long been hateful to the suffering many. She had reasons for believing that there was a young sister living, and her greatest desire was, to help that sister. I could tell her nothing but that there was such a sister; beyond that, I knew nothing. Her inducement to come to me, relying on my confidence, had been the hope that I could tell her the name and place of abode. Whereas to this wretched hour I am ignorant of both. * * * *

"These scraps of paper fail me. One was taken from me, with a warning, yesterday. I must finish my record today. She was a good, compassionate lady, and not happy in her marriage. How could she be! The brother distrusted and disliked her, and his influence was all opposed to her; she stood in dread of him, and in dread of her husband too. When I handed her down to the door, there was a child, a pretty boy from two to three years old, in her carriage.

"'For his sake, Doctor,' she said, pointing to him in tears, 'I would do all I can to make what poor amends I can. He will never prosper in his inheritance otherwise. I have a presentiment that if no other innocent atonement is made for this, it will one day be required of him. What I have left to call my own—it is little beyond the worth of a few jewels—I will make it the first charge of his life to bestow, with the compassion and lamenting of his dead mother, on this injured family, if the sister can be discovered.' She kissed the boy, and said, caressing him, 'It is for thine own dear sake. Thou wilt be faithful, little Charles?' The child answered her bravely, 'Yes!' I kissed her hand, and she took him in her arms, and went away caressing him. I never saw her more. As she had mentioned her husband's name in the faith that I knew it, I added no mention of it to my letter. I

sealed my letter, and, not trusting it out of my own hands, delivered it myself that day.

"That night, the last night of the year, towards nine o'clock, a man in a black dress rang at my gate, demanded to see me, and softly followed my servant, Ernest Defrage, a youth, up-stairs. When my servant came into the room where I sat with my wife—O my wife, beloved of my heart! My fair young English wife!—we saw the man, who was supposed to be at the gate, standing silent behind him.

"'An urgent case in the Rue St. Honoré,' he said. It would not detain me, he had a coach in waiting.

"It brought me here, it brought me to my grave. When I was clear of the house, a black muffler was drawn tightly over my mouth from behind, and my arms were pinioned. The two brothers crossed the road from a dark corner, and identified me with a single gesture. The Marquis took from his pocket the letter I had written, showed it me, burnt it in the light of a lantern that was held, and extinguished the ashes with his foot. Not a word was spoken. I was brought here, I was brought to my living grave.

"If it had pleased God to put it in the hard heart of either of the brothers, in all these frightful years, to grant me any tidings of my dearest wife—so much as to let me know by a word whether alive or dead—I might have thought that He had not quite abandoned them. But, now I believe that the mark of the red cross is fatal to them, and that they have no part in His mercies. And them and their descendants, to the last of their race, I, Alexandre Manette, unhappy prisoner, do this last night of the year 1767, in my unbearable agony, denounce to the times when all these things shall be answered for. I denounce them to Heaven and to earth."

The Brigand's Bride

BY LAURENCE OLIPHANT

(1829-1888)

THE Italian peninsula during the years 1859, 1860 and 1861 offered a particularly tempting field for adventure to ardent spirits in search of excitement; and, attracted partly by my sympathy with the popular movement, and partly by that simple desire, which gives so much zest to the life of youth, of risking it on all possible occasions, I had taken an active part, chiefly as an officious spectator, in all the principal events of those stirring years. It was in the spring of 1862 that I found matters beginning to settle down to a degree that threatened monotony; and with the termination of the winter gaieties at Naples and the close of the San Carlo, I seriously bethought me of accepting the offer of a naval friend who was about to engage in blockade-running, and offered to land me in the Confederate States, when a recrudescence of activity on the part of the brigand bands in Calabria induced me to turn my attention in that direction.

The first question I had to consider was, whether I should enjoy myself most by joining the brigands, or the troops which were engaged in suppressing them. As the former aspired to a political character, and called themselves patriotic bands fighting for their church, their country, and their king,—the refugee monarch of Naples,—one could espouse their cause without exactly laying one's self open to the charge of being a bandit; but it was notorious in point of fact that the bands cared for neither the pope nor the exiled king nor their annexed country, but committed the most abominable atrocities in the names of all the three, for the simple purpose of filling their pockets. I foresaw not only extreme difficulty in being accepted as a member of the fraternity, more especially as I had hitherto been identified with the Garibaldians, but also the probability of finding myself compromised by acts from which my conscience would revolt, and for which my life

would in all likelihood pay the forfeit. On the other hand, I could think of no friend among the officers of the bersaglieri and cavalry regiments then engaged in brigand-hunting in the Capitanata and Basilicata to whom I could apply for an invitation to join them.

Under these circumstances I determined to trust to the chapter of accidents; and, armed with a knapsack, a sketch-book, and an air-gun, took my seat one morning in the Foggia diligence, with the vague idea of getting as near the scene of operations as possible, and seeing what would turn up. The air-gun was not so much a weapon of offence or defence as a means of introduction to the inhabitants. It had the innocent appearance of rather a thick walking-cane, with a little brass trigger projecting; and in the afternoon I would join the group sitting in front of the chemist's, which, for some reason or other, is generally a sort of open-air club in a small Neapolitan town, or stroll into the single modest café of which it might possibly boast, and toy abstractedly with the trigger. This, together with my personal appearance,—for do what I would I could never make myself look like a Neapolitan,—would be certain to attract attention, and some one bolder than the rest would make himself the spokesman, and politely ask me whether the cane in my hand was an umbrella or a fishing-rod; on which I would amiably reply that it was a gun, and that I should have much pleasure in exhibiting my skill and the method of its operation to the assembled company. Then the whole party would follow me to an open space, and I would call for a pack of cards, and possibly —for I was a good shot in those days—pink the ace of hearts at fifteen paces. At any rate, my performances usually called forth plaudits, and this involved a further interchange of compliments and explanations, and the production of my sketch-book, which soon procured me the acquaintance of some ladies, and an invitation as an English artist to the house of some respectable citizen.

So it happened that, getting out of the diligence before it reached Foggia, I struck south, and wandered for some days from one little town to another, being always hospitably entertained, whether there happened to be an *albergo* or not, at private houses, seeing in this way more of the manners and customs of the inhabitants than would have been otherwise possible, gaining much information as to the haunts of the brigands, the whereabouts of the troops, and hearing much local gossip generally.

It was by thus imposing myself upon the hospitality of these unsophisticated people, that I worked my way, by slow degrees, chiefly on foot, into the part of the country I desired to visit; and I trust that I in a measure repaid them for it by the stores of information which I imparted to them, and of which they stood much in need, and by little sketches of their homes and the surrounding scenery, with which I presented them. I was, indeed, dependent in some measure for hospitality of this description, as I had taken no money with me, partly because, to tell the truth, I had scarcely got any, and partly because I was afraid of being robbed by brigands of the little I had. I therefore eschewed the character of a *milordo Inglese;* but I never succeeded in dispelling all suspicion that I might not be a nephew of the Queen, or at least a very near relative of Palmerston in disguise. It was so natural, seeing what a deep interest both her Majesty and the Prime Minister took in Italy, that they should send some one incognito whom they could trust to tell them all about it.

Meantime, I was not surprised, when I came to know the disposition of the inhabitants, at the success of brigandage. It has never been my fortune before or since to live among such a timid population. One day at a large town a leading landed proprietor received notice that if he did not pay a certain sum in blackmail,—I forget at this distance of time the exact amount,—his farm or *masseria* would be robbed. This farm, which was in fact a handsome country house, was distant about ten miles from the town. He therefore made an appeal to the citizens that they should arm themselves and help him to defend his property, as he had determined not to pay, and had taken steps to be informed as to the exact date when the attack was to be made in default of payment. More than three hundred citizens enrolled themselves as willing to turn out in arms. On the day preceding the attack by the brigands, a rendezvous was given to these three hundred on the great square for five in the morning, and thither I accordingly repaired, unable, however, to induce my host to accompany me, although he had signed as a volunteer. On reaching the rendezvous, I found the landed proprietor and a friend who was living with him, and about ten minutes afterward two other volunteers strolled up. Five was all we could muster out of three hundred. It was manifestly useless to attempt anything with so small a force, and no arguments could induce any of the others to turn out; so the unhappy gentleman had the satis-

faction of knowing that the brigands had punctually pillaged his place, carrying off all his live stock on the very day and at the very hour they said they would. As for the inhabitants venturing any distance from town, except under military escort, such a thing was unknown, and all communication with Naples was for some time virtually intercepted. I was regarded as a sort of monomaniac of recklessness because I ventured on a solitary walk of a mile or two in search of a sketch—an act of no great audacity on my part, for I had walked through various parts of the country without seeing a brigand, and found it difficult to realise that there was any actual danger in strolling a mile from a moderately large town.

Emboldened by impunity, I was tempted one day to follow up a most romantic glen in search of a sketch, when I came upon a remarkably handsome peasant girl, driving a donkey before her loaded with wood. My sudden appearance on the narrow path made the animal shy against a projecting piece of rock, off which he rebounded to the edge of the path, which, giving way, precipitated him and his load down the ravine. He was brought up unhurt against a bush some twenty feet below, the fagots of wood being scattered in his descent in all directions. For a moment the girl's large, fierce eyes flashed upon me with anger; but the impetuosity with which I went headlong after the donkey, with a view of repairing my error, and the absurd attempts I made to reverse the position of his feet, which were in the air, converted her indignation into a hearty fit of laughter, as, seeing that the animal was apparently uninjured, she scrambled down to my assistance. By our united efforts we at last succeeded in hoisting the donkey up to the path, and then I collected the wood and helped her to load it again—an operation which involved a frequent meeting of hands and of the eyes, which had now lost the ferocity that had startled me at first, and seemed getting more soft and beaming every time I glanced at them, till at last, producing my sketch-book, I ventured to remark, "Ah, signorina, what a picture you would make! Now that the ass is loaded, let me draw you before we part, that I may carry away the recollection of the loveliest woman I have seen."

"First draw the donkey," she replied, "that I may carry away a recollection of the *galantuomo* who first upset him over the bank, and then helped me to load him."

Smiling at this ambiguous compliment, I gave her the sketch she

desired, and was about to claim my reward, when she abruptly remarked:

"There is not time now; it is getting late, and I must not linger, as I have still an hour to go before reaching home. How is it that you are not afraid to be wandering in this solitary glen by yourself? Do you not know the risks?"

"I have heard of them, but I do not believe in them," I said; "besides, I should be poor plunder for robbers."

"But you have friends, who would pay to ransom you, I suppose, if you were captured?"

"My life is not worth a hundred scudi to any of them," I replied, laughing; "but I am willing to forego the pleasure of drawing you now, *bellissima,* if you will tell me where you live, and let me come and paint you there at my leisure."

"You're a brave one," she said, with a little laugh; "there is not another man in all Ascoli who would dare to pay me a visit without an escort of twenty soldiers. But I am too grateful for your amiability to let you run such a risk. *Addio,* Signor Inglese. There are many reasons why I can't let you draw my picture, but I am not ungrateful, see!"—and she offered me her cheek, on which I instantly imprinted a chaste and fraternal salute.

"Don't think that you've seen the last of me, *carissima,*" I called out, as she turned away. "I shall live on the memory of that kiss till I have an opportunity of repeating it."

And as I watched her retreating figure with an artist's eye, I was struck with its grace and suppleness, combined, as I had observed while she was helping me to load the donkey, with an unusual degree of muscular strength for a woman.

The spot at which this episode had taken place was so romantic that I determined to make a sketch of it, and the shades of evening were closing in so fast that they warned me to hurry if I would reach the town before dark. I had just finished it and was stooping to pick up my air-gun, when I heard a sudden rush, and before I had time to look up I was thrown violently forward on my face, and found myself struggling in the embrace of a powerful grasp, from which I had nearly succeeded in freeing myself, when the arms which were clasping me were reinforced by several more pairs, and I felt a rope being passed round my body.

"All right, signors!" I exclaimed. "I yield to superior numbers. You need not pull so hard; let me get up, and I promise to go with you quietly." And by this time I had turned sufficiently on my back to see that four men were engaged in tying me up.

"Tie his elbows together and let him get up," said one; "he is not armed. Here, Giuseppe, carry his stick and paint-box, while I feel his pockets. *Corpo di Baccho!* twelve bajocchi," he exclaimed, producing those copper coins with an air of profound disgust. "It is to be hoped he is worth more to his friends. Now, young man, trudge, and remember that the first sign you make of attempting to run away means four bullets through you."

As I did not anticipate any real danger, and as a prolonged detention was a matter of no consequence to a man without an occupation, I stepped forward with a light heart, rather pleased than otherwise with anticipations of the brigand's cave, and turning over in my mind whether or not I should propose to join the band.

We had walked an hour and it had become dark, when we turned off the road, up a narrow path that led between rocky sides to a glade, at the extremity of which, under an overhanging ledge, was a small cottage, with what seemed to be a patch of garden in front.

"Ho! Anita!" called out the man who appeared to be the leader of the band; "open! We have brought a friend to supper, who will require a night's lodgings."

An old woman with a light appeared, and over her shoulder, to my delight, I saw the face I had asked to be allowed to paint so shortly before. I was about to recognise her with an exclamation, when I saw a hurried motion of her finger to her lip, which looked a natural gesture to the casual observer, but which I construed into a sign of prudence.

"Where did you pick him up, Croppo?" she asked, carelessly. "He ought to be worth something."

"Just twelve bajocchi," he answered, with a sneering laugh. "Come, *amico mio,* you will have to give us the names of some of your friends."

"I am tolerably intimate with his Holiness the Pope, and I have a bowing acquaintance with the King of Naples, whom may God speedily restore to his own," I replied, in a light and airy fashion, which seemed exceedingly to exasperate the man called Croppo.

"Oh, yes, we know all about that; we never catch a man who does

not profess to be a Nero of the deepest dye in order to conciliate our sympathies. It is just as well that you should understand, my friend, that all are fish who come into our net. The money of the pope's friends is quite as good as the money of Garibaldi's. You need not hope to put us off with your Italian friends of any colour; what we want is English gold—good, solid English gold, and plenty of it."

"Ah," said I, with a laugh, "if you did but know, my friend, how long I have wanted it too! If you could only suggest an Englishman who would pay you for my life, I would write to him immediately, and we would go halves in the ransom. Hold!" I said, a bright idea suddenly striking me. "Suppose I were to write to my government—how would that do?"

Croppo was evidently puzzled; my cheerful and unembarrassed manner apparently perplexed him. He had a suspicion that I was even capable of the audacity of making a fool of him, and yet that proposition about the government rather staggered him; there might be something in it.

"Don't you think," he remarked, grimly, "it would add to the effect of your communication if you were to enclose your own ears in your letter? I can easily supply them; and if you are not a little more guarded in your speech you may possibly have to add your tongue."

"It would not have the slightest effect," I replied, paying no heed to his threat; "you don't know Palmerston as I do. If you wish to get anything out of him you must be excessively civil. What does he care about my ears?" And I laughed with such scornful contempt that Croppo this time felt that he had made a fool of himself, and I observed the lovely girl behind, while the corners of her mouth twitched with suppressed laughter, make a sign of caution.

"*Per Dio!*" he exclaimed, jumping up with fury. "Understand, Signor Inglese, that Croppo is not to be trifled with. I have a summary way of treating disrespect," and he drew a long and exceedingly sharp-looking two-edged knife.

"So you would kill the goose" ("and I certainly am a goose," I reflected), "that may lay a golden egg." But my allusion was lost upon him, and I saw my charmer touch her forehead significantly, as though to imply to Croppo that I was weak in the upper story.

"An imbecile without friends and twelve bajocchi in his pocket," he muttered, savagely. "Perhaps the night without food will restore his

senses. Come, fool!" and he roughly pushed me into a dark little chamber adjoining. "Here, Valeria, hold the light."

So Valeria was the name of the heroine of the donkey episode. As she held a small oil-lamp aloft I perceived that the room in which I was to spend the night had more the appearance of a cellar than a chamber; it had been excavated on two sides from the bank; on the third there was a small hole about six inches square, apparently communicating with another room, and on the fourth was the door by which I had entered, and which opened into the kitchen and general living-room of the inhabitants. There was a heap of onions running to seed, the fagots of fire-wood which Valera had brought that afternoon, and an old cask or two.

"Won't you give him some kind of a bed?" she asked Croppo.

"Bah! he can sleep on the onions," responded that worthy. "If he had been more civil and intelligent he should have had something to eat. You three," he went on, turning to the other men, "sleep in the kitchen, and watch that the prisoner does not escape. The door has a strong bolt besides. Come, Valeria."

And the pair disappeared, leaving me in a dense gloom, strongly pervaded by an odour of fungus and decaying onions. Groping into one of the casks, I found some straw, and spreading it on a piece of plank, I prepared to pass the night sitting with my back to the driest piece of wall I could find, which happened to be immediately under the air-hole—a fortunate circumstance, as the closeness was often stifling. I had probably been dozing for some time in a sitting position, when I felt something tickle the top of my head. The idea that it might be a large spider caused me to start, when, stretching up my hand, it came in contact with what seemed to be a rag, which I had not observed. Getting carefully up, I perceived a faint light gleaming through the aperture, and then saw that a hand was protruded through it, apparently waving the rag. As I felt instinctively that the hand was Valeria's, I seized the finger-tips, which was all I could get hold of, and pressed them to my lips. They were quickly drawn away, and then the whisper reached my ears:

"Are you hungry?"

"Yes."

"Then eat this," and she passed me a tin pannikin full of cold macaroni, which would just go through the opening.

"Dear Valeria," I said, with my mouth full, "how good and thoughtful you are!"

"Hush! he'll hear."

"Who?"

"Croppo."

"Where is he?"

"Asleep in the bed just behind me."

"How do you come to be in his bedroom?"

"Because I'm his wife."

"Oh!" A long pause, during which I collapsed upon my straw seat, and swallowed macaroni thoughtfully. As the result of my meditations, "Valeria, *carissima!*"

"Hush! Yes."

"Can't you get me out of this infernal den?"

"Perhaps, if they all three sleep in the kitchen; at present one is awake. Watch for my signal, and if they all three sleep I will manage to slip the bolt. Then you must give me time to get back into bed, and when you hear me snore you may make the attempt. They are all three sleeping on the floor, so be very careful where you tread; I will also leave the front door a little open, so that you can slip through without noise."

"Dearest Valeria!"

"Hush! Yes."

"Hand me that cane—it is my fishing-rod, you know—through this hole; you can leave the sketch-book and paint-box under the tree that the donkey fell against; I will call for them some day soon. And, Valeria, don't you think we could make our lips meet through this beastly hole?"

"Impossible. There's my hand; heavens! Croppo would murder me if he knew. Now keep quiet till I give the signal. Oh, do let go my hand!"

"Remember, Valeria, *bellissima, carissima,* whatever happens, that I love you."

But I don't think she heard this, and I went and sat on the onions, because I could see the hole better and the smell of them kept me awake.

It was at least two hours after this that the faint light appeared at

the hole in the wall and a hand was pushed through. I rushed at the finger-tips.

"Here's your fishing-rod," she said, when I had released them and she had passed me my air-gun. "Now be very careful how you tread. There is one asleep across the door, but you can open it about two feet. Then step over him; then make for a gleam of moonlight that comes through the crack of the front door, open it very gently, and slip out. *Addio, caro Inglese;* mind you wait till you hear me snoring."

Then she lingered, and I heard a sigh.

"What is it, sweet Valeria?" and I covered her hand with kisses.

"I wish Croppo had blue eyes like you."

This was murmured so softly that I may have been mistaken, but I'm nearly sure that was what she said; then she drew softly away, and two minutes afterward I heard her snoring. As the first sound issued from her lovely nostrils I stealthily approached the door, gently pushed it open, stealthily stepped over a space which I trusted cleared the recumbent figure that I could not see, cleared him, stole gently on for the streak of moonlight, trod squarely on something that seemed like an outstretched hand, for it gave under my pressure and produced a yell, felt that I must now rush for my life, dashed the door open, and down the path with four yelling ruffians at my heels. I was a pretty good runner, but the moon was behind a cloud and the way was rocky; moreover, there must have been a short cut I did not know, for one of my pursuers gained upon me with unaccountable rapidity—he appeared suddenly within ten yards of my heels. The others were at least a hundred yards behind. I had nothing for it but to turn round, let him almost run against the muzzle of my air-gun, pull the trigger, and see him fall in his tracks. It was the work of a second, but it checked my pursuers. They had heard no noise, but they found something that they did not bargain for, and lingered a moment; then they took up the chase with redoubled fury. But I had too good a start; and where the path joined the main road, instead of turning down toward the town as they expected I would, I dodged round in the opposite direction, the uncertain light this time favouring me, and I heard their footsteps and their curses dying away on the wrong track. Nevertheless I ran on at full speed, and it was not till the day was dawning that I began to feel safe and relax my efforts.

The sun had been up an hour when I reached a small town, and the

little *locanda* was just opening for the day when I entered it, thankful for a hot cup of coffee and a dirty little room, with a dirtier bed, where I could sleep off the fatigue and excitement of the night. I was strolling down almost the only street in the afternoon when I met a couple of carabineers riding into it, and shortly after encountered the whole troop, to my great delight in command of an intimate friend whom I had left a month before in Naples.

"Ah, *caro mio*," he exclaimed, when he saw me, "well met! What on earth are you doing here? Looking for those brigands you were so anxious to find when you left Naples? Considering that you are in the heart of their country, you should not have much difficulty in gratifying your curiosity."

"I have had an adventure or two," I replied, carelessly. "Indeed, that is partly the reason you find me here. I was just thinking how I could get safely back to Ascoli, when your welcome escort appeared; for I suppose you are going there and will let me take advantage of it."

"Only too delighted; and you can tell me your adventures. Let us dine together tonight, and I will find you a horse to ride on with us in the morning."

I am afraid my account of the episode was not strictly accurate in all its details, as I did not wish to bring down my military friends on poor Valeria; so I skipped all allusion to her and my detention in her home, merely saying that I had had a scuffle with brigands and had been fortunate enough to escape under cover of the night. As we passed it next morning I recognised the path which led up to Valeria's cottage, and shortly after observed that young woman herself coming up the glen.

"Holloa!" I said, with great presence of mind, as she drew near, "my lovely model, I declare! Just you ride on, old fellow, while I stop and ask her when she can come and sit to me again."

"You artists are sad rogues; what chances your profession must give you!" remarked my companion, as he cast an admiring glance on Valeria and rode discreetly on.

"There is nothing to be afraid of, lovely Valeria," I said, in a low tone, as I lingered behind; "be sure I will never betray either you or your rascally—hem! I mean your excellent Croppo. By the way, was that man much hurt that I was obliged to trip up?"

"Hurt! Santa Maria! he is dead, with a bullet through his heart.

Croppo says it must have been magic, for he had searched you and he knew you were not armed, and he was within a hundred yards of you when poor Pippo fell, and he heard no sound."

"Croppo is not far wrong," I said, glad of the opportunity thus offered of imposing on the ignorance and credulity of the natives. "He seemed surprised that he could not frighten me the other night. Tell him he was much more in my power than I was in his, dear Valeria," I added, looking tenderly into her eyes. "I didn't want to alarm you; that was the reason I let him off so easily; but I may not be so merciful next time. Now, sweetest, that kiss you owe me, and which the wall prevented your giving me the other night." She held up her face with the innocence of a child as I stooped from my saddle.

"I shall never see you again, Signor Inglese," she said, with a sigh; "for Croppo says it is not safe, after what happened the night before last, to stay another hour. Indeed, he went off yesterday, leaving me orders to follow today; but I went first to put your sketch-book under the bush where the donkey fell, and where you will find it."

It took us another minute or two to part after this; and when I had ridden away I turned to look back, and there was Valeria gazing after me. "Positively," I reflected, "I am over head and ears in love with the girl, and I believe she is with me. I ought to have nipped my feelings in the bud when she told me she was his wife; but then he is a brigand, who threatened both my ears and my tongue, to say nothing of my life. To what extent is the domestic happiness of such a ruffian to be respected?" And I went on splitting the moral straws suggested by this train of thought until I had recovered my sketch-book and overtaken my escort, with whom I rode triumphantly back into Ascoli, where my absence had been the cause of much anxiety and my fate was even then being eagerly discussed. My friends with whom I usually sat round the chemist's door were much exercised by the reserve which I manifested in reply to the fire of cross-examination to which I was subjected for the next few days; and English eccentricity, which was proverbial even in this secluded town, received a fresh illustration in the light and airy manner with which I treated a capture and escape from brigands, which I regarded with such indifference that I could not be induced even to condescend to details. "It was a mere scuffle; there were only four; and, being an Englishman, I polished them all off with the 'box' " and I closed my fist and struck a scientific attitude of self-

defence, branching off into a learned disquisition on the pugilistic art, which filled my hearers with respect and amazement. From this time forward the sentiment with which I regarded my air-gun underwent a change. When a friend had made me a present of it a year before I regarded it in the light of a toy and rather resented the gift as too juvenile. "I wonder he did not give me a kite or a hoop," I mentally reflected. Then I had found it useful among Italians, who are a trifling people and like playthings; but now that it had saved my life and sent a bullet through a man's heart, I no longer entertained the same feeling of contempt for it. Not again would I make light of it—this potent engine of destruction which had procured me the character of being a magician. I would hide it from human gaze and cherish it as a sort of fetich. So I bought a walking-stick and an umbrella, and strapped it up with them, wrapped in my plaid; and when, shortly after, an unexpected remittance from an aunt supplied me with money enough to buy a horse from one of the officers of my friend's regiment, which soon after arrived, and I accepted their invitation to accompany them on their brigand-hunting expeditions, not one of them knew that I had such a weapon as an air-gun in my possession.

Our *modus operandi* on these occasions was as follows: On receiving information from some proprietor that the brigands were threatening his property,—it was impossible to get intelligence from the peasantry, for they were all in league with the brigands; indeed, they all took a holiday from regular work and joined a band for a few weeks from time to time,—we proceeded, with a force sufficiently strong to cope with the supposed strength of the band, to the farm in question. The bands were all mounted, and averaged from 200 to 400 men each. It was calculated that upward of 2000 men were thus engaged in harrying the country, and this enabled the Neri to talk of the king's forces engaged in legitimate warfare against those of Victor Emmanuel. Riding over the vast plains of the Capitanata, we would discern against the sky outline the figure of a solitary horseman. This we knew to be a picket. Then there was no time to be lost, and away we would go for him helter-skelter across the plain; he would instantly gallop in on the main body, probably occupying a *masseria*. If they thought they were strong enough they would show fight. If not they would take to their heels in the direction of the mountains, with us in full cry after them. If they were hardly pressed they would scatter, and we were

obliged to do the same, and the result would be that the swiftest horsemen might possibly effect a few captures. It was an exciting species of warfare, partaking a good deal more of the character of a hunting-field than of cavalry skirmishing. Sometimes, where the ground was hilly, we had bersaglieri with us, and as the brigands took to the mountains the warfare assumed a different character. Sometimes, in default of these active little troops, we took local volunteers, whom we found a very poor substitute. On more than one occasion when we came upon the brigands in a farm they thought themselves sufficiently strong to hold it against us, and once the cowardice of the volunteers was amusingly illustrated. The band was estimated at about 200, and we had 100 volunteers and a detachment of 50 cavalry. On coming under the fire of the brigands the cavalry captain, who was in command, ordered the volunteers to charge, intending when they had dislodged the enemy to ride him down on the open; but the volunteer officer did not repeat the word and stood stock-still, his men all imitating his example.

"Charge! I say," shouted the cavalry captain, "why don't you charge? I believe you're afraid!"

"*E vero,*" said the captain of volunteers, shrugging his shoulders.

"Here, take my horse—you're only fit to be a groom; and you, men, dismount and let these cowards hold your horses, while you follow me." And, jumping from his horse, the gallant fellow, followed by his men, charged the building, from which a hot fire was playing upon them, sword in hand. In less than a quarter of an hour the brigands were scampering, some on foot and some on horseback, out of the farm buildings, followed by a few stray and harmless shots from such of the volunteers as had their hands free. We lost three men killed and five wounded in this little skirmish, and killed six of the brigands, besides making a dozen prisoners. When I say "we" I mean my companions, for, having no weapon, I had discreetly remained with the volunteers. The scene of this gallant exploit was on the classic battle-field of Cannæ. This captain, who was not the friend I had joined the day after my brigand adventure, was a most plucky and dashing cavalry officer, and was well seconded by his men, who were all Piedmontese and of very different temperament from the Neapolitans. On one occasion a band of 250 brigands waited for us on the top of a small hill, never dreaming that we should charge up it with the odds five to one against us; but we did, and after firing a volley at us, which emptied a couple of saddles,

they broke and fled when we were about twenty yards from them. Then began one of the most exciting scurries across country it was ever my fortune to be engaged in. The brigands scattered—so did we; and I found myself with two troopers in chase of a pair of bandits, one of whom seemed to be the chief of the band. A small stream wound through the plain, which we dashed across. Just beyond was a tributary ditch, which would have been considered a fair jump in the hunting-field: both brigands took it in splendid style. The hindmost was not ten yards ahead of the leading trooper, who came a cropper; on which the brigand reined up, fired a pistol-shot into the prostrate horse and man, and was off; but the delay cost him dear. The other trooper, who was a little ahead of me, got safely over. I followed suit. In another moment he had fired his carabine into the brigand's horse, and down they both came by the run. We instantly reined up, for I saw there was no chance of overtaking the remaining brigand, and the trooper was in the act of cutting down the man as he struggled to his feet, when to my horror I recognised the lovely features of—Valeria.

"Stay, man!" I shouted, throwing myself from my horse. "It's a woman! touch her if you dare!" And then, seeing the man's eye gleam with indignation, I added, "Brave soldiers, such as you have proved yourself to be, do not kill women; though your traducers say you do, do not give them cause to speak truth. I will be responsible for this woman's safety. Here, to make it sure you had better strap us together." I piqued myself exceedingly on this happy inspiration, whereby I secured an arm-in-arm walk, of a peculiar kind, it is true, with Valeria; and indeed my readiness to sacrifice myself seemed rather to astonish the soldier, who hesitated. However, his comrade, whose horse had been shot in the ditch, now came up, and seconded my proposal as I offered him a mount on mine.

"How on earth am I to let you escape, dear Valeria?" I whispered, giving her a sort of affectionate nudge; the position of our arms prevented my squeezing hers as I could have wished, and the two troopers kept behind us, watching us, I thought, suspiciously.

"It is quite impossible now—don't attempt it," she answered; "perhaps there may be an opportunity later."

"Was that Croppo who got away?" I asked.

"Yes. He could not get his cowardly men to stand on that hill."

"What a bother those men are behind, dearest! Let me pretend to

scratch my nose with this hand that is tied to yours, which I can thus bring to my lips."

I accomplished this manœuvre rather neatly, but parties now came straggling in from other directions, and I was obliged to give up whispering and become circumspect. They all seemed rather astonished at our group, and the captain laughed heartily as he rode up and called out, "Who have you got tied to you there, *caro mio?*"

"Croppo's wife. I had her tied to me for fear she should escape; besides, she is not bad-looking."

"What a prize!" he exclaimed. "We have made a tolerable haul this time—twenty prisoners in all, among them the priest of the band. Our colonel has just arrived, so I am in luck; he will be delighted. See, the prisoners are being brought up to him now; but you had better remount and present yours in a less singular fashion."

When we reached the colonel we found him examining the priest. His breviary contained various interesting notes written on some of the fly-leaves.

For instance:

"Administered extreme unction to A——, shot by Croppo's order; my share ten scudi.

"Ditto, ditto, to R——, hung by Croppo's order; my share two scudi.

"Ditto, ditto, to S——, roasted by Croppo's order to make him name an agent to bring his ransom; overdone by mistake, and died, so got nothing.

"Ditto, ditto, to P——, executed by the knife by Croppo's order for disobedience.

"M—— and F—— and D——, three new members, joined today; confessed them, and received the usual fees."

He was a dark, beetle-browed-looking ruffian, this holy man; and the colonel, when he had finished examining his book of prayer and crime, tossed it to me, saying, "There! that will show your friends in England the kind of politicians we make war against. Ha! what have we here? This is more serious." And he unfolded a piece of paper which had been concealed in the breast of the priest. "This contains a little valuable information," he added, with a grim smile. "Nobody like priests and women for carrying about political secrets, so you may have made

a valuable capture," and he turned to where I stood with Valeria; "let her be carefully searched."

Now the colonel was a very pompous man, and the document he had just discovered on the priest added to his sense of self-importance. When, therefore, a large, carefully folded paper was produced from the neighbourhood of Valeria's lovely bosom his eyes sparkled with anticipation. "Ho, ho!" he exclaimed, as he clutched it eagerly, "the plot is thickening!" And he spread out triumphantly, before he had himself seen what it was, the exquisitely drawn portrait of a donkey. There was a suppressed titter, which exploded into a shout when the bystanders looked into the colonel's indignant face. I only was affected differently as my gaze fell upon this touching evidence of dear Valeria's love for me, and I glanced at her tenderly. "This has a deeper significance than you think for," said the colonel, looking round angrily. "Croppo's wife does not carefully secrete a drawing like that on her person for nothing. See, it is done by no common artist. It means something, and must be preserved."

"It may have a biblical reference to the state of Italy. You remember Issachar was likened to an ass between two burdens. In that case it probably emanated from Rome," I remarked; but nobody seemed to see the point of the allusion, and the observation fell flat.

That night I dined with the colonel, and after dinner I persuaded him to let me visit Valeria in prison, as I wished to take the portrait of the wife of the celebrated brigand chief. I thanked my stars that my friend who had seen her when we met in the glen was away on duty with his detachment and could not testify to our former acquaintance.

My meeting with Valeria on this occasion was too touching and full of tender passages to be of any general interest. Valeria told me that she was still a bride, that she had only been married a few months, and that she had been compelled to become Croppo's wife against her choice, as the brigand's will was too powerful to be resisted; but that, though he was jealous and attached to her, he was stern and cruel, and, so far from winning her love since her marriage, he had rather estranged it by his fits of passion and ferocity. As may be imagined, the portrait, which was really very successful, took some time in execution, the more especially as we had to discuss the possibilities of Valeria's escape.

"We are going to be transferred tomorrow to the prison at Foggia,"

she said. "If while we were passing through the market-place a disturbance of some sort could be created, as it is market-day and all the country people know me and are my friends, a rescue might be attempted. I know how to arrange for that, only they must see some chance of success."

A bright thought suddenly struck me; it was suggested by a trick I had played shortly after my arrival in Italy.

"You know I am something of a magician, Valeria; you have had proof of that. If I create a disturbance by magic tomorrow when you are passing through the market-place, you won't stay to wonder what is the cause of the confusion, but instantly take advantage of it to escape?"

"Trust me for that, *caro mio*."

"And if you escape when shall we meet again?"

"I am known too well now to risk another meeting. I shall be in hiding with Croppo, where it will be impossible for you to find me, nor while he lives could I ever dare to think of leaving him; but I shall never forget you,"—and she pressed my hands to her lips,—"though I shall no longer have the picture of the donkey to remember you by."

"See, here's my photograph; that will be better," said I, feeling a little annoyed—foolishly, I admit. Then we strained each other to our respective hearts and parted. Now it so happened that my room in the *locanda* in which I was lodging overlooked the market-place. Here at ten o'clock in the morning I posted myself: for that was the hour, as I had been careful to ascertain, when the prisoners were to start for Foggia. I opened the window about three inches and fixed it there; I took out my gun, put eight balls in it, and looked down upon the square. It was crowded with the country people in their bright-coloured costumes chaffering over their produce. I looked above them to the tall campanile of the church which filled one side of the square. I receded a step and adjusted my gun on the ledge of the window to my entire satisfaction. I then looked down the street in which the prison was situated, and which debouched on the square, and awaited events. At ten minutes past ten I saw the soldiers at the door of the prison form up, and then I knew that the twenty prisoners of whom they formed the escort were starting; but the moment they began to move I fired at the big bell in the campanile, which responded with a loud clang. All the people in the square looked up. As the prisoners entered the square, which they had to cross in its whole breadth, I fired again

and again. The bell banged twice, and the people began to buzz about. "Now," I thought, "I must let the old bell have it." By the time five more balls had struck the bell with a resounding din the whole square was in commotion. A miracle was evidently in progress or the campanile was bewitched. People began to run hither and thither; all the soldiers forming the escort gaped open-mouthed at the steeple as the clangour continued. As soon as the last shot had been fired I looked down into the square and saw all this, and I saw that the prisoners were attempting to escape, and in more than one instance had succeeded, for the soldiers began to scatter in pursuit, and the country people to form themselves into impeding crowds as though by accident; but nowhere could I see Valeria. When I was quite sure she had escaped I went down and joined the crowd. I saw three prisoners captured and brought back, and when I asked the officer in command how many had escaped he said three—Croppo's wife, the priest, and another.

When I met my cavalry friends at dinner that evening it was amusing to hear them speculate upon the remarkable occurrence which had, in fact, upset the wits of the whole town. Priests and vergers and sacristans had visited the campanile, and one of them had brought away a flattened piece of lead, which looked as if it might have been a bullet; but the suggestion that eight bullets could have hit the bell in succession without anybody hearing a sound was treated with ridicule. I believe the bell was subsequently exorcised with holy water. I was afraid to remain with the regiment with my air-gun after this, lest someone should discover it and unravel the mystery; besides, I felt a sort of traitor to the brave friends who had so generously offered me their hospitality; so I invented urgent private affairs which demanded my immediate return to Naples, and on the morning of my departure found myself embraced by all the officers of the regiment from the colonel downward, who in the fervour of their kisses thrust sixteen waxed moustache-points against my cheeks.

About eighteen months after this I heard of the capture and execution of Croppo, and I knew that Valeria was free; but I had unexpectedly inherited a property and was engaged to be married. I am now a country gentleman with a large family. My sanctum is stocked with various mementos of my youthful adventures, but none awakens in me such thrilling memories as are excited by the breviary of the brigand priest and the portrait of the brigand's bride.

In the Time of the Terror

BY HONORÉ DE BALZAC

(*1799-1850*)

On January 22, 1793, about eight o'clock in the evening, an old lady was walking down the steep incline which ends in front of the Church of Saint Laurent in Paris. It had snowed so hard all day that her footsteps were scarcely audible. The streets were deserted, and the feeling of fear which silence naturally inspires was increased by the remembrance of the terror under which France then groaned. The old lady had met no one on the way, and her eyesight, which had long been failing, did not allow of her distinguishing in the lamplight the few passers-by, scattered here and there like shadows along the immense vista of the *faubourg*. She went on bravely alone through the solitude, as if her age were a talisman to preserve her from all harm. When she had passed the Rue des Morts, she thought she could distinguish the firm, heavy tread of a man walking behind her. She fancied it was not the first time that she had heard the sound. She was afraid, thinking that she was being followed, so she tried to walk faster than before, in order to reach a shop-window in which the lights were bright enough for her to test the truth of her suspicions. As soon as she found herself in the gleam of light which streamed out horizontally from the shop she turned her head suddenly and perceived a human form in the mist. This indistinct glimpse was enough; a feeling of terror fell upon her; she tottered for a moment under it, for now she felt certain that this stranger had accompanied her from the first step she had taken outside her own house. Her desire to escape from this spy gave her strength; incapable of reasoning, she walked twice as fast as before, as though it were possible for her to distance a man necessarily much more active than she. After running for some minutes, she reached a pastry-cook's shop, went in and fell, rather than sat down, on a chair which was standing before the counter. As her hand rattled upon the

latch a young woman seated at her embroidery raised her eyes from her work, looked through the square pane of glass, and recognized the old-fashioned violet silk mantle which enveloped the old lady; then she hurriedly opened a drawer, as if to take out something that she had been keeping there for her. Not only did this movement and the expression of the young woman's face betray her desire to get rid of the stranger as soon as possible, as a person whom she did not want to see, but she even let a gesture of impatience escape her when she found the drawer empty. Then, without looking at the lady, she went out hastily from behind the counter into the back part of the ship and called her husband; he appeared at once.

"Wherever have you put—?" she asked, mysteriously, glancing in the direction of the old lady, and not finishing the sentence.

The pastry-cook could only see the old lady's head-dress, a huge black bonnet, trimmed with violet ribands, but he looked at his wife as much as to say, "Do you think I should leave a thing like that in your counter?" and disappeared. His wife, surprised that the old lady sat so still and silent, went close up to her; when she saw her she was seized with a feeling of compassion, and perhaps of curiosity too. Although the old lady's face was naturally pallid, like the face of a person who practices austerities in secret, it was easy to see that some recent emotion had rendered it even more pallid than usual. Her head-dress was so arranged as to hide her hair, which was white, no doubt from age, for it was evident that she did not wear powder, as there was no sign of it upon the collar of her dress. This absence of ornament gave her face a look of religious severity. Her features were proud and grave. In former times the manners and habits of people of rank were so different from those of the other classes that it was easy then to distinguish a noble. Thus the young woman felt sure that the strange lady was a *ci-devant,* who had at one time been attached to the Court.

"Madame?" said she involuntarily, forgetting, in the respect she inspired, that the title was proscribed.

The old lady made no answer; she kept her eyes fixed on the shop-window, as if some terrible object were depicted on the glass.

"What is the matter, *citoyenne?*" asked the shop-man, returning at that moment.

The worthy pastry-cook awoke the lady from her reverie, by handing her a small cardboard box wrapt up in blue paper.

"Nothing, nothing, my friends," said she in a gentle voice.

She raised her eyes to the pastry-cook, as if to thank him by a look; but seeing a red cap upon his head, she cried aloud—

"Ah! you have betrayed me!"

The young woman and her husband answered with a gesture of horror; the stranger blushed, either with relief, or with regret at having suspected them.

"Forgive me!" she said at once, with childish sweetness. Then she drew a gold *louis* out of her pocket and gave it to the pastry-cook. "That is the price we agreed upon," said she. There is a state of want recognized instinctively by those in want themselves. The pastry-cook and his wife looked at one another, interchanging the same thought as they glanced at the old lady. The *louis* was evidently her last. Her hands trembled as she held out the coin to them; she looked at it sorrowfully, but without grudging, though she seemed to be conscious of the full extent of the sacrifice. Hunger and misery were engraved upon her face in as legible characters as her ascetic habits and her present fear. Her clothes still bore the traces of past richness. She was dressed in faded silk, with carefully mended lace, and an elegant though worn mantle—in fact, the rags of former wealth. The shopkeepers, wavering between pity and self-interest, tried to soothe their conscience with words.

"*Citoyenne,* you seem very poorly."

"Would Madame like to take anything?" asked the woman, catching up her husband's words.

"We've got some very good broth," said the pastry-cook.

"It's so cold, perhaps you have caught a chill, Madame, coming; you are welcome to rest a bit and warm yourself."

"We are not so black as the devil," said the pastry-cook.

Reassured by the friendly tone of the charitable pastry-cook, the lady admitted that she had been followed by a man, and was afraid to go home alone.

"Is that all?" replied the man with the red cap. "Wait a minute for me, *citoyenne.*"

He gave the *louis* to his wife; then, moved by that sense of acknowledgment which steals into the heart of a vendor who has received an exorbitant price for goods of slight value, he went and put on his uniform as a *guarde national,* took his hat and sword and returned

under arms. But his wife had had time to reflect. As in many other hearts, reflection closed the hand which benevolence had opened. The woman had got frightened; she was afraid her husband would get into some scrape, so she plucked at the lappet of his coat to detain him. However, in obedience to an instinct of charity, the good man offered on the spot to escort the old lady.

"It looks as if the man whom the *citoyenne* is afraid of were still prowling round the shop," said the young woman sharply.

"I am afraid he is," frankly admitted the lady.

"Suppose it were a spy? or perhaps there is a conspiracy! Do not go—and take the box away from her."

These words were whispered into the pastry-cook's ear by his wife; they froze the extempore courage which had inflated his breast.

"Eh! I'll just go and say a word to him, and he'll be off in a minute," he exclaimed, opening the door and going out precipitately.

The old lady sat down again on her chair as passive as a child; she looked almost silly. The honest shopman speedily returned; his face, red enough to begin with, and further inflamed by the fire of his oven, had suddenly become livid; he was so overcome with terror that his legs tottered under him, and his eyes looked like a drunkard's.

"D'you want to get our heads cut off, wretched aristocrat!" he cried, furious. "Come, take to your heels, and don't ever show yourself here again. Don't expect me to furnish you with the elements of conspiracy!"

As the pastry-cook finished these words, he tried to snatch back the little box, which the old lady had put into one of her pockets. But scarcely had the impudent fellow's hands touched her clothes, when the strange lady—preferring to face the dangers of her walk unprotected save by God, rather than lose that she had just purchased—regained all the agility of her youth; she sprang to the door, opened it suddenly, and vanished from the gaze of the pastry-cook and his wife, leaving them trembling and stupefied. As soon as she found herself outside, she set off at a quick walk; but her strength soon failed her, for she heard the heavy footsteps of the spy who was following her so pitilessly, crunching the snow behind her. She was obliged to stop; he stopped too. Whether from fear or lack of intelligence, she did not dare either to speak or to look at him. She went on, walking slowly; then the man slackened his steps, always keeping at a distance from which he was

able to watch her. The stranger seemed to be the very shadow of the woman. Nine o'clock struck as this silent pair passed again before the Church of Saint Laurent. It is in the nature of every heart, even the feeblest, that a feeling of calmness should succeed to violent agitation, for, if feeling is infinite, our organization is limited. So the strange woman, as she experienced no harm from her supposed persecutor, was inclined to look upon him as an unknown friend anxious to protect her. She summed up all the circumstances attendant on the apparitions of the stranger with a view to discover plausible corroboration of this consoling theory; she was bent on finding out good intentions in him rather than evil. Forgetting the terror with which he had inspired the pastry-cook just before, she passed on with a firm step through the higher parts of le faubourg Saint Martin. After walking for half an hour, she reached a house situated at the corner formed by the principal street of the *faubourg* and the street which leads to *la barrière de Pantin*. Even now this is still one of the loneliest places in the whole of Paris. The north wind blows over les buttes de Saint Chaumont and de Belleville, and whistles through the houses—or rather hovels—sprinkled over a nearly deserted valley, divided by walls of mud and bones. This desolate spot seemed the natural refuge of misery and despair. The man, implacable in his pursuit of this poor creature, who was yet bold enough to traverse those silent streets by night, seemed impressed by the scene that rose before him. He stopped to consider, standing upright in an attitude of hesitation. A lamp, whose flickering flame could scarcely penetrate the mist, cast its faint light upon him. Fright gave the old woman eyes. She thought she could descry a sinister look upon the man's features. She felt her fears reawakening, —then, taking advantage of a sort of uncertainty which seemed to make him linger, she glided through the darkness to the door of a solitary house, touched a spring, and was gone as swift as a dream. The man stood motionless looking at the house. In a certain measure it might have served for the type of the wretched dwellings of this *faubourg*. The crazy cabin was built of ashlar smeared with a coat of plaster, so rotten and with such big cracks that it looked as if the least puff of wind would blow the whole thing down. The roof, covered with brown moss-grown tiles, had sunk in several places, and seemed on the point of falling in under the weight of the snow. There were three windows in each story, the frames mouldering with damp and

starting with the action of the sun; it was evident that the cold must find its way through them into the rooms. The house was as isolated as an ancient tower that time has forgotten to destroy. The attics at the top of the wretched buildings were pierced with windows at irregular intervals, and from these shone a dim light, but the rest of the house was in complete darkness. The old woman had some difficulty in climbing the rough awkward staircase, up which a rope served for a handrail. She knocked mysteriously at the door of a lodging in the attic; an old man offered her a chair; she sat down in it precipitately.

"Hide! hide!" said she. "Though we only go out so seldom, they know everything we do, and spy out every step we take."

"What is it now?" asked another old woman who was sitting by the fire.

"The man who has been prowling round the house since yesterday morning has been following me this evening."

At these words the three inhabitants of the garret looked at each other; they did not try to conceal the signs of profound terror visible on their faces. The old man was the least agitated of the three, perhaps because he was in the most danger. A brave man, under the burden of great misfortune or under the yoke of persecution, has already—so to speak—begun his self-sacrifice; he looks upon each day of his life only as one more victory gained over fate. It was easy to see from the looks of the two women which were fastened on the old man that he and he alone was the object of their intense anxiety.

"Why should we cease to trust in God, sisters?" said he in a hollow voice, but with much earnestness; "we sang His praises amid the shouts of the murderers and the cries of the dying in the Carmelite Convent; if He willed that I should be saved from the massacre, it was doubtless to preserve me for a destiny that I must endure without murmuring. God protects His own, He can dispose of them according to His will. It is you we must take thought for, not for me."

"No," said one of the two old women, "what is *our* life compared with the life of a priest?"

"When I was once outside the Abbaye de Chelles I looked upon myself as dead," exclaimed that one of the two nuns who had not been out. "Look," said the one who had just come in, "here are the Hosts." "But," she exclaimed, "I can hear someone coming up the stairs."

At these words they all three listened; the noise ceased.

"Do not be alarmed," said the priest, "if someone tries to find you. Someone, on whose fidelity we can count, was to take all necessary steps for crossing the frontier, and will come for letters which I have written to le Duc de Langeais and le Marquis de Beauséant, asking them to consider means for rescuing you from this terrible country, and the death or misery which awaits you here."

"But will you not follow us?" whispered the two nuns eagerly, with a sort of despair.

"My place is where there are victims," said the priest simply.

The women looked at their guest in silence, with holy admiration.

"Sœur Marthe," said he, addressing the sister who had gone out for the Hosts, "this messenger will answer *Fiat voluntas* to the word *Hosanna*."

"There *is* someone on the stairs!" exclaimed the other nun, opening a hiding-place contrived under the roof.

This time in the profound silence, they could easily hear the steps, which were covered with lumps of dried mud, creaking under the tread of a man. The priest squeezed with difficulty into a sort of wardrobe, and the nun threw some clothes over him.

"You can shut the door, Sœur Agathe," said he in a muffled voice.

He was scarcely hidden when there were three raps at the door. The two holy women trembled; they took counsel by looks, not daring to pronounce a single word. They appeared to be both about sixty years old. Cut off from the world for forty years, they were like plants accustomed to the atmosphere of a greenhouse, which die if they are put out of it. They were so habituated to convent life that they could not conceive any other. One morning their gratings had been broken down, and they had shuddered at finding themselves free. It is easy to picture the sort of unnatural numbness that the events of the Revolution had produced in their innocent hearts. Incapable of reconciling their monastic ideas with the difficulties of life, they could not even understand their own situation; they were like children who have been once cared for and then abandoned by their special providence—their mother, praying instead of crying. Thus in the face of the danger they foresaw at this moment, they remained mute and passive, knowing no other defense than Christian resignation. The man who had asked for admittance interpreted their silence as consent; he opened the door at once and presented himself. The two nuns shuddered when they

recognized him as the person who had been prowling round their house for some time past collecting information about them. They sat motionless, looking at him with apprehensive curiosity, like a shy child silently staring at a stranger. The man was stout and of lofty stature; there was nothing in his bearing, his manner, or his physiognomy suggestive of an evil nature. He imitated the stillness of the nuns, while his eyes slowly examined the room he had just entered.

Two straw mats, placed on the bare boards, served as beds for the two nuns; there was only one table, in the middle of the room; on it stood some plates, three knives, and a round loaf; a small fire burned in the grate; some pieces of wood piled up in a corner bore further witness to the poverty of the two recluses. The walls were covered with a layer of very old paint, showing the bad condition of the roof by the stains upon it, which marked with brown streams the infiltration of the rain. A relic, no doubt rescued from the village of the Abbaye de Chelles, was placed like an ornament upon the mantelpiece. Three chairs, two chests, and a wretched cupboard completed the furniture of the room, but a door near the fireplace suggested that there might be a second.

The person who had introduced himself under such terrible auspices into the bosom of this family did not take long to make an inventory of their cell. His features assumed an expression of pity as he cast a look of benevolence upon the two women; he was at least as embarrassed as they. The strange silence which they all three kept did not last long, for presently the stranger began to comprehend the moral feebleness and inexperience of the two poor creatures, so he said to them in a voice which he tried to make gentle: "I am not come to you, as an enemy, *citoyennes*—" He stopped short, and then went on: "*Mes sœurs*, if any misfortune should happen to you, believe me it is not I who will have contributed to it. I have a favor to ask of you."

They still kept silence.

"If I intrude upon you—if I annoy you, tell me so freely—I will leave you; but I hope you will understand that I am entirely devoted to you; that if there is any service I could render you, you may command me without fear, for I alone, perhaps—now that there is no king—am above the law."

There was a ring of truth in his words. Sœur Agathe, the nun who belonged to the family of Langeais, and whose manners seemed to show

that she had formerly been familiar with brilliant society and had breathed the air of a court, hastened to point to a chair, as if to invite their visitor to sit down. The stranger showed a sort of pleasure mingled with sadness when he saw this gesture; then he waited to sit down until the two worthy ladies had done so themselves.

"You have given refuge," he went on, "to a venerable priest who has not taken the oaths, who escaped miraculously from a massacre of the Carmelites."

"Hosanna!" said Sœur Agathe, interrupting him, and looking at him with nervous curiosity.

"No, I do not think that is his name," he replied.

"But, Monsieur," said Sœur Marthe eagerly, "we have not got any priest here; and—"

"Then you should have been more prudent and wary," answered the stranger, stretching out his hand and taking a breviary from the table. "I do not think that you are likely to know Latin, and—"

He did not go on; the extraordinary emotion expressed by the faces of the poor nuns made him afraid he had gone too far; they trembled, and their eyes filled with tears.

"Do not distress yourselves," he said frankly. "I know the name of your guest and your own; three days ago I learned all about your distress, and your devotion to the venerable Abbé de—"

"Sh!" said Sœur Agathe simply, putting her finger to her lips.

"You see, *mes sœurs,* that if I had conceived the horrible plan of betraying you, I might have already accomplished it more than once."

When the priest heard these words he extricated himself from his prison, and appeared in the middle of the room.

"I cannot believe, Monsieur," said he to the strange man, "that you are one of our persecutors; I trust myself to you. What is it that you want of me?"

The holy confidence of the priest, the noble fervor expressed in all his features, would have disarmed a murderer. The mysterious person who had thus brought excitement into this scene of misery and resignation sat for a moment looking at the group of the three before him, then, assuming a confidential tone, he addressed the priest thus: *"Mon père,* I came to entreat you to celebrate a requiem mass for the repose of the soul of—of a—of a consecrated person whose body will never rest in hallowed ground." The priest shuddered involuntarily. The two nuns,

not yet comprehending to whom the stranger referred, remained in an attitude of curiosity, their necks stretched out and their faces turned to the two speakers. The ecclesiastic scrutinized the man; genuine anxiety was visible in his face, and his eyes expressed ardent supplication.

"*Eh bien!* Come back tonight, at midnight; I shall be ready to celebrate the only funeral office we can offer in expiation of the crime of which you speak."

The stranger trembled, but he looked as if some feeling of satisfaction, at once solemn and sweet, had triumphed over some secret sorrow. After respectfully saluting the priest and the two holy women, he departed with an expression of mute gratitude understood by these three generous hearts. About two hours after this scene, he returned, knocked cautiously at the outer door of the attic, and was received by Mademoiselle de Beauséant, and led into the second room of their humble retreat. Here all had been prepared for the ceremony. Between the two pillars of the chimney-piece the nun had pushed up the old cupboard; its antique shape was hidden under a magnificent altar frontal of green *moire*. A large ebony and ivory crucifix was fastened to the yellow wall, making the bareness only more apparent, and of necessity attracting the eye to itself. The sisters had managed to set up four little slender tapers upon this temporary altar, by fastening them to it with sealing wax. The tapers cast a pale light, almost absorbed by the dead walls, their feeble flicker scarcely reaching the rest of the room; it cast its beams only upon the Holy Instruments, as it were, a ray of light falling from heaven upon the naked altar. The floor was reeking with damp. The roof sloped rapidly on both sides like the roof of the other garret, and was scored with cracks through which came the icy blast. Nothing could have been less stately, yet nothing was more solemn than this mournful ceremony. Profound silence, through which the least sound arising from la route d'Allemagne could be heard, cast a veil of somber majesty over the midnight scene. Indeed the grandeur of the action contrasted strongly with the poverty of the instruments; therefrom arose a feeling of religious awe. On each side of the altar, regardless of the deadly damp, knelt the two aged nuns upon the tiling of the floor, and prayed together with the priest. Clad in his sacrificial vestments, he set out a golden chalice adorned with precious stones, no doubt one of the sacred vessels saved from

the pillage of the Abbaye de Chelles. By the side of this ciborium, recalling by its richness the splendor of the monarchy, were placed two glasses, scarcely good enough for the lowest inn, containing the water and the wine for the Holy Sacrifice. For want of a missal the priest had placed his breviary upon the corner of the altar. A common towel was put ready for the washing of the innocent and bloodless hands. The whole was infinite yet little; poor but noble; at once holy and profane. The stranger came and knelt down devoutly between the two nuns. The priest had tied a piece of crape around the chalice and the crucifix; having no other mean of showing the intention of this requiem mass, he had put God Himself in mourning weeds. Suddenly the man noticed it; he was seized with a memory that held such power over him, that the sweat stood in drops upon his wide and lofty brow. The four silent actors of this scene looked at one another mysteriously. Then their souls, rising with one another in their mutual influence, communicated one to another their own sensations, and were melted together in religious pity. It seemed as if their thought had called up the martyr whose remains had been devoured by quicklime, and that his shadow rose before them in all its royal majesty. They were celebrating an *obit* without the body of the dead. Under these gaping laths and tiles four Christians were about to intercede before God for a King of France, were about to celebrate his funeral without the coffin. Here was the purest of all devotion, an astonishing act of fidelity performed without one thought for the future. Doubtless to the eyes of God, it was as the glass of water which weighs in the balance as heavy as the greatest virtues. The whole monarchy was present in the prayers of a priest and two poor women; perhaps, too, the Revolution itself was represented in the man, for his face betrayed too much remorse not to cause that belief that he was fulfilling the vows of a boundless repentance.

Instead of pronouncing the Latin words, *Introibo ad altare Dei*, etc., the priest, by some divine inspiration, looked upon the three assistants —the symbols there of Christian France—and said to them, as though to blot out the wretchedness of the garret: "We are about to enter into the Sanctuary of God!" At these words, uttered with thrilling earnestness, the server and the two nuns were filled with religious awe. God would not have revealed Himself in greater majesty under the vaults of Saint Peter at Rome, than He revealed Himself then to the eyes of these Christians in this refuge of poverty. The truth is so per-

fect—that between Him and man every intermediary seems useless, and that He draws His greatness only from Himself. The stranger's devotion was real, the sentiment too which united the prayers of these four servants of God and the King was unanimous. The holy words rang through the silence like heavenly music. There was a moment when the stranger was overcome with tears; it was at the *Pater Noster*. The priest added, in Latin, this petition, which the man no doubt understood: *Et remitte scelus regicidis sicut Ludovicius eis remisit semetipse.* (And forgive the regicides as Louis himself forgave them.) The two nuns saw two great tears roll down the stranger's manly cheeks and fall upon the floor. The priest recited the Office for the Dead. The *Domine salvum fac regem* intoned in a low voice, went to the hearts of the faithful Royalists when they remembered that the child-king, for whom their prayers ascended to the Most High, at that moment was a captive in the hands of his enemies. The stranger shivered at the thought that a new crime might still be committed, wherein he would no doubt be forced to take part. When the funeral service was over, the priest made a sign to the two nuns, and they went out. As soon as he found himself alone with the stranger he went up to him with a sad and gentle air, and said in a fatherly voice: "My son, if you have stained your hands in the blood of the martyr-king, confide in me. There is no sin which cannot be effaced in the eyes of God by repentance as touching and sincere as yours seems to be."

At the first words pronounced by the ecclesiastic the stranger let a movement of involuntary terror escape him; but his face recovered its calmness and he looked at the astonished priest with confidence.

"Father," said he in a voice visibly affected, "no one is more innocent than I of the blood shed—"

"I must believe you," said the priest. He paused while he once more scrutinized his penitent; then, persisting in the belief that he was one of those timorous *Conventionnels* who betrayed an inviolable and consecrated head in order to save their own, he replied in a grave voice: "Consider, my son, the fact that you have not co-operated in so great a crime is not sufficient to be absolved from it. Those men who were able to defend the King, and left their swords in their scabbards, will have a very heavy account to render to the King of Heaven. Oh! yes," continued the old priest, shaking his head impressively from right

to left—"yes, very heavy!—for, by remaining aloof, they became the passive accomplices of this terrible crime."

"You think," asked the stranger in amazement, "that indirect participation will be punished? The soldier commanded to fall into line —is he then responsible?"

The priest hesitated.

The stranger was glad of the embarrassment into which he had thrown the puritan Royalist, by placing him between the dogma of passive obedience—which according to the Monarchists, was the essence of all military law—and the equally important dogma which magnifies into sanctity the respect due to the royal person, in the priest's silence he eagerly descried a solution to the doubts which tormented him. Then, in order not to leave the venerable *jansenist* time for further reflection, he said to him: "I should blush to offer you any fee for the funeral service you have just celebrated for the repose of the King's soul and the relief of my conscience; one cannot pay for a thing of inestimable value except by an offering also above price. Will you deign, Monsieur, to accept the gift of a holy relic which I offer you? The day will come, perhaps, when you will understand its value."

As the stranger finished these words he presented the ecclesiastic with a little box, which felt extremely light. He took it, as it were, unconsciously, for the man's solemn words, the tone in which he spoke, and the respect with which he held out the box, struck him with the profoundest astonishment. Then they returned into the room where the two nuns were waiting.

"You are in the house," said the stranger, "belonging to a man—Mucius Scaevola, the plasterer, who lives on the first floor—who is well known in the section for his patriotism; but he is secretly attached to the Bourbons. He was formerly huntsman to Monseigneur le Prince de Conti, and owes all his fortune to him. As long as you do not go out of his house, you are safer than any other place in France. Stay here; there are pious souls who will watch over your wants, and you will be able to wait, without danger, for less evil times. In a year, on the 21st of January"—(as he pronounced these last words he could not hide a shudder)—"if you do adopt this wretched place for your refuge, I will return to celebrate the expiatory mass with you—"

He did not finish his sentence. Then, saluting the silent inhabitants

of the attic, he cast a last look on all the signs of their poverty and disappeared.

For the two innocent nuns, such an adventure assumed all the interest of a romance. As soon, then, as the venerable Abbé had informed them of the mysterious gift which the man had made him, so solemnly, they placed the box on the table, and their three anxious faces faintly lit up by the light of a tallow dip, betrayed an indescribable curiosity. Mademoiselle de Langeais opened the box, and found a very fine *batiste* handkerchief, soiled with sweat; when they unfolded it they found that there were stains upon it.

"It is blood!" said the priest.

"It is marked with the royal crown!" exclaimed the other sister.

The two nuns dropped the precious relic in horror. For these two simple souls the mystery which enveloped the stranger became inexplicable; as to the priest, from that day he did not even attempt to account for it.

The three prisoners soon perceived, in spite of the Terror, that a powerful hand was stretched out over them. First, they received provisions and fuel; then, the two nuns discovered that there must be a woman co-operating with their protector, for linen and clothes were sent them which enabled them to go out without exciting remark by the aristocratic fashion of the dresses which they had been obliged to continue to wear; finally, Mucius Scaevola gave them two *cartes civiques*. From time to time warnings necessary to the safety of the priest reached them in roundabout ways. These counsels came so opportunely that they were convinced that they could only have been given by a person initiated into secrets of State. In spite of the famine which weighed over Paris, these outlaws found rations of white bread regularly brought to the door of their cabin by invisible hands; however, they thought they had discovered in Mucius Scaevola the mysterious agent of these benefactions, which were always both suitably timed and ingeniously carried out. The three nobles then, who continued to dwell in the same attic, could not doubt that their protector was the person who had come to celebrate the mass of expiation during the night of the 22nd of January, 1793; thus he became the object of their special devotion; he was their only hope, they lived through him alone. They had added to their prayers special prayers for him; night and morning the pious creatures offered their vows for his happiness,

prosperity, and safety; they besought God to keep far from him every snare, to deliver him from his enemies and grant him a long and peaceful life. To their gratitude, renewed so to speak every day, was necessarily allied a feeling of curiosity which grew each day more intense. The circumstances that had attended the stranger's apparition were the subject of their conversations; they formed a thousand conjectures concerning him; even the mere distraction of thought which he caused was the fresh source of advantage to them. They promised themselves to make sure of not letting him escape from their gratitude the evening he would come back, according to his promise, to celebrate the sad anniversary of the death of Louis XVI. That night, so impatiently awaited, arrived at last. At midnight, the sound of the stranger's heavy footsteps was heard upon the old wooden staircase; the room had been prepared to receive him, the altar was vested. This time the sisters opened the door to greet him, and both hastened to the stairs with a light. Mademoiselle de Langeais even went a few steps down in order to see their benefactor sooner.

"Come," she said kindly, in a voice broken by emotion—"come we were expecting you."

The man raised his head, cast a somber look at the nun, and made no answer. She felt as if a mantle of ice had fallen upon her; she was silent. Gratitude and curiosity expired in their hearts at the sight of him. Perhaps he seemed to them, whose hearts were excited by sentiment and disposed to expand into friendship, more chilling, taciturn, and terrible than he really was. The three poor prisoners comprehended that he desired to remain a stranger to them, and resigned themselves. The priest fancied he saw a smile upon the man's lips at the moment he perceived the preparation that they had made for his reception; but he immediately repressed it. He heard mass and prayed, then he departed, after having replied with a few polite words of refusal to Mademoiselle de Langeais's invitation to partake of the little collation which they had prepared.

After the 9th of *Thermidor*, the nuns and the Abbé de Marolles were able to walk through Paris without the least risk. The first expedition which the Abbé made was to a perfumery shop, at the sign of *La Reine des fleurs*, kept by a *citoyen* and *citoyenne* Ragon, late perfumers to the Court, who remained faithful to the royal family, and whom the Vendéans made use of to correspond with the Princess and the Royal-

ist Committee in Paris. The Abbé, dressed as the times required, was just at the doorstep of this shop, which was situated between Saint Roche and la rue des Trondeurs—when a crowd that filled la rue Saint Honoré prevented his going out.

"What's this?" said he to Madame Ragon.

"It is nothing," she replied; "only the tumbril and the executioner going to la Place Louis XV. Ah! we saw it often enough last year; but today, just four days after the anniversary of the Twenty-first of January, one can look at the ghastly procession without any pain."

"Why," said the Abbé, "what you say is not Christian."

"Ah! but it is the execution of Robespierre's accomplices. They defended themselves as long as they could, but now it's their turn—*over there,* where they have sent so many innocent men."

The crowd filled la rue Saint Honoré, and passed by like a flood. The Abbé de Marolles, yielding to an impulse of curiosity, looked, and saw above the heads of the crowd, standing erect on the tumbril, the man who had heard his Mass three days before.

"Who is it?" said he; "the man—"

"It's the executioner," answered Monsieur Ragon, calling the *exécuteur des hautes œuvres* by his title under the monarchy.

"Mon ami, mon ami!" cried Madame Ragon; "Monsieur l'Abbé is dying!" and the old lady got a flask of vinegar to bring the priest to his senses, for he had fainted. "No doubt what he gave me," said he, "was the handkerchief with which the King wiped his face when he was going to his martyrdom.—Poor man! The axe had a heart in its steel when none was found in all France!"

The perfumers thought the poor priest was delirious.

The Mysterious Sketch

BY ÉMILE ERCKMANN AND ALEXANDRE CHATRIAN

(*1822-1899—1826-1890*)

I

Opposite the chapel of Saint Sebalt in Nuremberg, at the corner of Trabaus Street, there stands a little tavern, tall and narrow, with a toothed gable and dusty windows, whose roof is surmounted by a plaster Virgin. It was there that I spent the unhappiest days of my life. I had gone to Nuremberg to study the old German masters; but in default of ready money, I had to paint portraits—and such portraits! Fat old women with their cats on their laps, big-wigged aldermen, burgomasters in three-cornered hats—all horribly bright with ochre and vermilion. From portraits I descended to sketches, and from sketches to silhouettes.

Nothing is more annoying than to have your landlord come to you every day with pinched lips, shrill voice, and impudent manner to say: "Well, sir, how soon are you going to pay me? Do you know how much your bill is? No; that doesn't worry you! You eat, drink, and sleep calmly enough. God feeds the sparrows. Your bill now amounts to two hundred florins and ten kreutzers—it is not worth talking about."

Those who have not heard anyone talk in this way can form no idea of it; love of art, imagination, and the sacred enthusiasm for the beautiful are blasted by the breath of such an attack. You become awkward and timid; all your energy evaporates, as well as your feeling of personal dignity, and you bow respectfully at a distance to the burgomaster Schneegans.

One night, not having a sou, as usual, and threatened with imprisonment by this worthy Mister Rap, I determined to make him a bankrupt by cutting my throat. Seated on my narrow bed, opposite the

window, in this agreeable mood, I gave myself up to a thousand philosophical reflections, more or less comforting.

"What is man?" I asked myself. "An omnivorous animal; his jaws, provided with canines, incisors, and molars, prove it. The canines are made to tear meat; the incisors to bite fruits; and the molars to masticate, grind and triturate animal and vegetable substances that are pleasant to smell and to taste. But when he has nothing to masticate, this being is an absurdity in Nature, a superfluity, a fifth wheel to the coach."

Such were my reflections. I dared not open my razor for fear that the invincible force of my logic would inspire me with the courage to make an end of it all. After having argued so finely, I blew out my candle, postponing the sequel till the morrow.

That abominable Rap had completely stupefied me. I could do nothing but silhouettes, and my sole desire was to have some money to rid myself of his odious presence. But on this night a singular change came over my mind. I awoke about one o'clock—I lit my lamp, and, enveloping myself in my gray gabardine, I drew upon the paper a rapid sketch after the Dutch school—something strange and bizarre, which had not the slightest resemblance to my ordinary conceptions.

Imagine a dreary courtyard enclosed by high dilapidated walls. These walls are furnished with hooks, seven or eight feet from the ground. You see, at a glance, that it is a butchery.

On the left, there extends a lattice structure; you perceive through it a quartered beef suspended from the roof by enormous pulleys. Great pools of blood run over the flagstones and unite in a ditch full of refuse.

The light falls from above, between the chimneys where the weathercocks stand out from a bit of the sky the size of your hand, and the roofs of the neighboring houses throw bold shadows from story to story.

At the back of this place is a shed, beneath the shed a pile of wood, and upon the pile of wood some ladders, a few bundles of straw, some coils of rope, a chicken-coop, and an old dilapidated rabbit-hutch.

How did these heterogeneous details suggest themselves to my imagination? I don't know; I had no reminiscences, and yet every stroke of the pencil seemed the result of observation, and strange because it was all so true. Nothing was lacking.

But on the right, one corner of the sketch remained a blank. I did not know what to put there. . . . Something suddenly seemed to writhe there, to move! Then I saw a foot, the sole of a foot. Notwithstanding this improbable position, I followed my inspiration without reference to my own criticism. This foot was joined to a leg—over this leg, stretched out with effort, there soon floated the skirt of a dress. In short, there appeared by degrees, an old woman, pale, disheveled, and wasted, thrown down at the side of a well, and struggling to free herself from a hand that clutched at her throat.

It was a murder scene that I was drawing. The pencil fell from my hand.

This woman, in the boldest attitude, with her thighs bent on the curb of the well, her face contracted by terror, and her two hands grasping the murderer's arm, frightened me. I could not look at her. But the man—he, the person to whom that arm belonged—I could not see him. It was impossible for me to finish the sketch.

"I am tired," I said, my forehead dripping with perspiration; "there is only this figure to do; I will finish it tomorrow. It will be easy then."

And I went to bed again, thoroughly frightened by my vision.

The next morning, I got up very early. I was dressing in order to resume my interrupted work, when two little knocks were heard on my door.

"Come in!"

The door opened. An old man, tall, thin, and dressed in black, appeared on the threshold. This man's face, his eyes set close together and his large nose like the beak of an eagle, surmounted by a high bony forehead, had something severe about it. He bowed to me gravely.

"Mister Christian Vénius, the painter?" said he.

"That is my name, sir."

He bowed again, adding:

"The Baron Frederick Van Spreckdal."

The appearance of the rich amateur, Van Spreckdal, judge of the criminal court, in my poor lodging, greatly disturbed me. I could not help throwing a stealthy glance at my old worm-eaten furniture, my damp hangings and my dusty floor. I felt humiliated by such dilapidation; but Van Spreckdal did not seem to take any account of these details; and sitting down at my little table:

"Mister Vénius," he resumed, "I come—" But at this instant his glance fell upon the unfinished sketch—he did not finish his phrase.

I was sitting on the edge of my little bed; and the sudden attention that this personage bestowed upon one of my productions made my heart beat with an indefinable apprehension.

At the end of a minute, Van Spreckdal lifted his head:

"Are you the author of that sketch?" he asked me with an intent look.

"Yes, sir."

"What is the price of it?"

"I never sell my sketches. It is the plan for a picture."

"Ah!" said he, picking up the paper with the tips of his long yellow fingers.

He took a lens from his waistcoat pocket and began to study the design in silence.

The sun was now shining obliquely into the garret. Van Spreckdal never said a word; the hook of his immense nose increased, his heavy eyebrows contracted, and his long pointed chin took a turn upward, making a thousand little wrinkles in his long, thin cheeks. The silence was so profound that I could distinctly hear the plaintive buzzing of a fly that had been caught in a spider's web.

"And the dimensions of this picture, Mister Vénius," he said without looking at me.

"Three feet by four."

"The price?"

"Fifty ducats."

Van Spreckdal laid the sketch on the table, and drew from his pocket a large purse of green silk shaped like a pear; he drew the rings of it—

"Fifty ducats," said he, "here they are."

I was simply dazzled.

The Baron rose and bowed to me, and I heard his big ivory-headed cane resounding on each step until he reached the bottom of the stairs. Then, recovering from my stupor, I suddenly remembered that I had not thanked him, and I flew down the five flights like lightning; but when I reached the bottom, I looked to the right and left; the street was deserted.

"Well!" I said, "this is strange."

And I went upstairs again all out of breath.

II

The surprising way in which Van Spreckdal had appeared to me threw me into a deep wonderment. "Yesterday," I said to myself, as I contemplated the pile of ducats glittering in the sun, "yesterday I formed the wicked intention of cutting my throat, all for the want of a few miserable florins, and now today Fortune has showered them from the clouds. Indeed it was fortunate that I did not open my razor; and, if the same temptation ever comes to me again, I will take care to wait until the morrow."

After making these judicious reflections, I sat down to finish the sketch; four strokes of the pencil and it would be finished. But here an incomprehensible difficulty awaited me. It was impossible for me to make those four sweeps of the pencil; I had lost the thread of my inspiration, and the mysterious personage no longer stood out in my brain. I tried in vain to evoke him, to sketch him, and to recover him; he no longer accorded with the surroundings than with a figure by Raphael in a Teniers inn-kitchen. I broke out into a profuse perspiration.

At this moment, Rap opened the door without knocking, according to his praiseworthy custom. His eyes fell upon my pile of ducats and in a shrill voice he cried:

"Eh! eh! so I catch you. Will you still persist in telling me, Mr. Painter, that you have no money?"

And his hooked fingers advanced with that nervous trembling that the sight of gold always produces in a miser.

For a few seconds I was stupefied.

The memory of all the indignities that this individual had inflicted upon me, his covetous look, and his impudent smile exasperated me. With a single bound, I caught hold of him, and pushed him out of the room, slamming the door in his face.

This was done with the crack and rapidity of a spring snuff-box.

But from outside the old usurer screamed like an eagle:

"My money, you thief, my money!"

The lodgers came out of their rooms, asking:

"What is the matter? What has happened?"

I opened the door suddenly and quickly gave Mister Rap a kick in the spine that sent him rolling down more than twenty steps.

"That's what's the matter!" I cried, quite beside myself. Then I shut the door and bolted it, while bursts of laughter from the neighbors greeted Mister Rap in the passage.

I was satisfied with myself; I rubbed my hands together. This adventure had put new life into me; I resumed my work, and was about to finish the sketch when I heard an unusual noise.

Butts of muskets were grounded on the pavement. I looked out of my window and saw three soldiers in full uniform with grounded arms in front of my door.

I said to myself in my terror: "Can it be that that scoundrel of a Rap has had any bones broken?"

And here is the strange peculiarity of the human mind: I, who the night before had wanted to cut my own throat, shook from head to foot, thinking that I might well be hanged if Rap were dead.

The stairway was filled with confused voices. It was an ascending flood of heavy footsteps, clanking arms, and short syllables.

Suddenly somebody tried to open my door. It was shut.

Then there was a general clamor.

"In the name of the law—open!"

I arose, trembling and weak in the knees.

"Open!" the same voice repeated.

I thought to escape over the roofs; but I had hardly put my head out of the little snuff-box window, when I drew back, seized with vertigo. I saw in a flash all the windows below with their shining panes, their flower-pots, their bird-cages, and their gratings. Lower, the balcony; still lower, the street lamp; still lower again, the sign of the "Red Cask" framed in iron-work; and, finally, three glittering bayonets, only awaiting my fall to run me through the body from the sole of my foot to the crown of my head. On the roof of the opposite house a tortoise-shell cat was crouching behind a chimney, watching a band of sparrows fighting and scolding in the gutter.

One can not imagine to what clearness, intensity, and rapidity the human eye acquires when stimulated by fear.

At the third summons I heard:

"Open, or we shall force it!"

Seeing that flight was impossible, I staggered to the door and drew the bolt.

Two hands immediately fell upon my collar. A dumpy, little man, smelling of wine, said:

"I arrest you!"

He wore a bottle-green redingote, buttoned to the chin, and a stove-pipe hat. He had large brown whiskers, rings on every finger, and was named Passauf.

He was the chief of police.

Five bull-dogs with flat caps, noses like pistols, and lower jaws turning upward, observed me from outside.

"What do you want?" I asked Passauf.

"Come downstairs," he cried roughly, as he gave a sign to one of his men to seize me.

This man took hold of me, more dead than alive, while several other men turned my room upside down.

I went downstairs supported by the arms like a person in the last stages of consumption—with hair disheveled and stumbling at every step.

They thrust me into a cab between two strong fellows, who charitably let me see the ends of their clubs, held to their wrists by a leather string—and then the carriage started off.

I heard behind us the feet of all the urchins of the town.

"What have I done?" I asked one of my keepers.

He looked at the other with a strange smile and said:

"Hans—he asks what he has done!"

That smile froze my blood.

Soon a deep shadow enveloped the carriage; the horses' hoofs resounded under an archway. We were entering the Raspelhaus. Of this place one might say:

"Dans cet antre,
Je vois fort bien comme l'on entre,
Et ne vois point comme on en sort."

All is not rose-colored in this world; from the claws of Rap I fell into a dungeon, from which very few poor devils have a chance to escape.

Large dark courtyards and rows of windows like a hospital, and furnished with gratings; not a sprig of verdure, not a festoon of ivy,

not even a weathercock in perspective—such was my new lodging. It was enough to make one tear his hair out by the roots.

The police officers, accompanied by the jailer, took me temporarily to a lock-up.

The jailer, if I remember rightly, was named Kasper Schlüssel; with his gray, woolen cap, his pipe between his teeth, and his bunch of keys at his belt, he reminded me of the Owl-God of the Caribs. He had the same golden yellow eyes, that see in the dark, a nose like a comma, and a neck that was sunk between the shoulders.

Schlüssel shut me up as calmly as one locks up his socks in a cupboard, while thinking of something else. As for me, I stood for more than ten minutes with my hands behind my back and my head bowed. At the end of that time I made the following reflection: "When falling, Rap cried out, 'I am assassinated,' but he did not say by whom. I will say it was my neighbor, the old merchant with the spectacles: he will be hanged in my place."

This idea comforted my heart, and I drew a long breath. Then I looked about my prison. It seemed to have been newly whitewashed, and the walls were bare of designs, except in one corner, where a gallows had been crudely sketched by my predecessor. The light was admitted through a bull's-eye about nine or ten feet from the floor; the furniture consisted of a bundle of straw and a tub.

I sat down upon the straw with my hands around my knees in deep despondency. It was with great difficulty that I could think clearly; but suddenly imagining that Rap, before dying, had denounced me, my legs began to tingle, and I jumped up coughing, as if the hempen cord were already tightening around my neck.

At the same moment, I heard Schlüssel walking down the corridor; he opened the lock-up, and told me to follow him. He was still accompanied by the two officers, so I fell into step resolutely.

We walked down long galleries, lighted at intervals by small windows from within. Behind a grating I saw the famous Jic-Jack, who was going to be executed on the morrow. He had on a straitjacket and sang out in a raucous voice:

"*Je suis le roi de ces montagnes.*"

Seeing me, he called out:

"Eh! comrade! I'll keep a place for you at my right."

The two police officers and the Owl-God looked at each other and smiled, while I felt the goose-flesh creep down the whole length of my back.

III

Schlussel shoved me into a large and very dreary hall, with benches arranged in a semicircle. The appearance of this deserted hall, with its two high grated windows, and its Christ carved in old brown oak with His arms extended and His head sorrowfully inclined upon His shoulder, inspired me with I do not know what kind of religious fear that accorded with my actual situation.

All my ideas of false accusation disappeared, and my lips tremblingly murmured a prayer.

I had not prayed for a long time; but misfortune always brings us to thoughts of submission. Man is so little in himself!

Opposite me, on an elevated seat, two men were sitting with their backs to the light, and consequently their faces were in shadow. However, I recognized Van Spreckdal by his aquiline profile, illuminated by an oblique reflection from the window. The other person was fat, he had round, chubby cheeks and short hands, and he wore a robe, like Van Spreckdal.

Below was the clerk of the court, Conrad; he was writing at a low table and was tickling the tip of his ear with the feather-end of his pen. When I entered, he stopped to look at me curiously.

They made me sit down, and Van Spreckdal, raising his voice, said to me:

"Christian Vénius, where did you get this sketch?"

He showed me the nocturnal sketch which was then in his possession. It was handed to me. After having examined it, I replied:

"I am the author of it."

A long silence followed; the clerk of the court, Conrad, wrote down my reply. I heard his pen scratch over the paper, and I thought: "Why did they ask me that question? That has nothing to do with the kick I gave Rap in the back."

"You are the author of it?" asked Van Spreckdal. "What is the subject?"

"It is a subject of pure fancy."

"You have not copied the details from some spot?"

"No, sir; I imagined it all."

"Accused Christian," said the judge in a severe tone, "I ask you to reflect. Do not lie."

"I have spoken the truth."

"Write that down, clerk," said Van Spreckdal.

The pen scratched again.

"And this woman," continued the judge—"this woman who is being murdered at the side of the well—did you imagine her also?"

"Certainly."

"You have never seen her?"

"Never."

Van Spreckdal rose indignantly; then, sitting down again, he seemed to consult his companion in a low voice.

These two dark profiles silhouetted against the brightness of the window, and the three men standing behind me, the silence in the hall —everything made me shiver.

"What do you want with me? What have I done?" I murmured.

Suddenly Van Spreckdal said to my guardians:

"You can take the prisoner back to the carriage; we will go to Metzerstrasse."

Then, addressing me:

"Christian Vénius," he cried, "you are in a deplorable situation. Collect your thoughts and remember that if the law of men is inflexible, there still remains for you the mercy of God. This you can merit by confessing your crime."

These words stunned me like a blow from a hammer. I fell back with extended arms, crying:

"Ah! what a terrible dream!"

And I fainted.

When I regained consciousness, the carriage was rolling slowly down the street; another one preceded us. The two officers were always with me. One of them on the way offered a pinch of snuff to his companion; mechanically I reached out my hand toward the snuff-box, but he withdrew it quickly.

My cheeks reddened with shame, and I turned away my head to conceal my emotion.

"If you look outside," said the man with the snuff-box, "we shall be obliged to put handcuffs on you."

"May the devil strangle you, you infernal scoundrel!" I said to myself. And as the carriage now stopped, one of them got out, while the other held me by the collar; then, seeing that his comrade was ready to receive me, he pushed me rudely to him.

These infinite precautions to hold possession of my person boded no good; but I was far from predicting the seriousness of the accusation that hung over my head until an alarming circumstance opened my eyes and threw me into despair.

They pushed me along a low alley, the pavement of which was unequal and broken; along the wall there ran a yellowish ooze, exhaling a fetid odor. I walked down this dark place with the two men behind me. A little further there appeared the chiaroscuro of an interior courtyard.

I grew more and more terror-stricken as I advanced. It was no natural feeling: it was a poignant anxiety, outside of nature—like the nightmare. I recoiled instinctively at each step.

"Go on!" cried one of the policemen, laying his hand on my shoulder; "go on!"

But what was my astonishment when, at the end of the passage, I saw the courtyard that I had drawn the night before, with its walls furnished with hooks, its rubbish-heap of old iron, its chicken-coops, and its rabbit-hutch. Not a dormer window, high or low, not a broken pane, not the slightest detail had been omitted.

I was thunderstruck by this strange revelation.

Near the well were the two judges, Van Spreckdal and Richter. At their feet lay the old woman extended on her back, her long, thin, gray hair, her blue face, her eyes wide open, and her tongue between her teeth.

It was a horrible spectacle!

"Well," said Van Spreckdal, with solemn accents, "what have you to say?"

I did not reply.

"Do you remember having thrown this woman, Theresa Becker, into this well, after having strangled her to rob her of her money?"

"No," I cried, "no! I do not know this woman; I never saw her before. May God help me!"

"That will do," he replied in a dry voice. And without saying another word he went out with his companion.

The officers now believed they had best put handcuffs on me. They took me back to the Raspelhaus, in a state of profound stupidity. I did not know what to think; my conscience itself troubled me; I even asked myself if I really had murdered the old woman!

In the eyes of the officers I was condemned.

I will not tell you of my emotions that night in the Raspelhaus, when, seated on my straw bed with the window opposite me and the gallows in perspective, I heard the watchman cry in the silence of the night: "Sleep, people of Nuremberg; the Lord watches over you. One o'clock! Two o'clock! Three o'clock!"

Everyone may form his own idea of such a night. There is a fine saying that it is better to be hanged innocent than guilty. For the soul, yes; but for the body, it makes no difference; on the contrary, it kicks, it curses its lot, it tries to escape, knowing well enough that its rôle ends with the rope. Add to this, that it repents not having sufficiently enjoyed life and at having listened to the soul when it preached abstinence.

"Ah! if I had only known!" it cried, "you would not have led me about by a string with your big words, your beautiful phrases, and your magnificent sentences! You would not have allured me with your fine promises. I should have had many happy moments that are now lost forever. Everything is over! You said to me: 'Control your passions.' Very well! I did control them. Here I am now! They are going to hang me, and you—later they will speak of you as a sublime soul, a stoical soul, a martyr to the errors of Justice. They will never think about me!"

Such were the sad reflections of my poor body.

Day broke; at first, dull and undecided, it threw an uncertain light on my bull's-eye window with its cross-bars; then it blazed against the wall at the back. Outside the street became lively. This was a market-day; it was Friday. I heard the vegetable wagons pass and also the country people with their baskets. Some chickens cackled in their coops in passing and some butter sellers chattered together. The market opposite opened, and they began to arrange the stalls.

Finally, it was broad daylight and the vast murmur of the increasing crowd, housekeepers who assembled with baskets on their arms, coming and going, discussing and marketing, told me that it was eight o'clock.

With the light, my heart gained a little courage. Some of my black thoughts disappeared. I desired to see what was going on outside.

Other prisoners before me had managed to climb up to the bull's-eye; they had dug some holes in the wall to mount more easily. I climbed in my turn, and, when seated in the oval edge of the window, with my legs bent and my head bowed, I could see the crowd, and all the life and movement. Tears ran freely down my cheeks. I thought no longer of suicide—I experienced a need to live and breathe, which was really extraordinary.

"Ah!" I said, "to live what happiness! Let them harness me to a wheelbarrow—let them put a ball and chain around my leg—nothing matters if I may only live!"

The old market, with its roof shaped like an extinguisher, supported on heavy pillars, made a superb picture: old women seated before their panniers of vegetables, their cages of poultry and their baskets of eggs; behind them the Jews, dealers in old clothes, their faces the color of old boxwood; butchers with bare arms, cutting up meat on their stalls; countrymen, with large hats on the backs of their heads, calm and grave with their hands behind their backs and resting on their sticks of hollywood, and tranquilly smoking their pipes. Then the tumult and noise of the crowd—those screaming, shrill, grave, high, and short words—those expressive gestures—those sudden attitudes that show from a distance the progress of a discussion and depict so well the character of the individual—in short, all this captivated my mind, and notwithstanding my sad condition, I felt happy to be still of the world.

Now, while I looked about in this manner, a man—a butcher—passed, inclining forward and carrying an enormous quarter of beef on his shoulders; his arms were bare, his elbows were raised upward and his head was bent under them. His long hair, like that of Salvator's Sicambrian, hid his face from me; and yet, at the first glance, I trembled.

"It is he!" I said.

All the blood in my body rushed to my heart. I got down from the window trembling to the ends of my fingers, feeling my cheeks quiver, and the pallor spread over my face, stammering in a choked voice:

"It is he! he is there—there—and I, I have to die to expiate his crime. Oh, God! what shall I do? What shall I do?"

A sudden idea, an inspiration from Heaven, flashed across my mind. I put my hand in the pocket of my coat—my box of crayons was there!

Then rushing to the wall, I began to trace the scene of the murder with superhuman energy. No uncertainty, no hesitation! I knew the man! I had seen him! He was there before me!

At ten o'clock the jailer came to my cell. His owl-like impassibility gave place to admiration.

"Is it possible?" he cried, standing at the threshold.

"Go, bring me my judges," I said to him, pursuing my work with an increasing exultation.

Schlüssel answered:

"They are waiting for you in the trial-room."

"I wish to make a revelation," I cried, as I put the finishing touches to the mysterious personage.

He lived; he was frightful to see. His full-faced figure, foreshortened upon the wall, stood out from the white background with an astonishing vitality.

The jailer went away.

A few minutes afterward the two judges appeared. They were stupefied. I, trembling, with extended hand, said to them:

"There is the murderer!"

After a few moments of silence, Van Spreckdal asked me:

"What is his name?"

"I don't know; but he is at this moment in the market; he is cutting up meat in the third stall to the left as you enter from Trabaus Street."

"What do you think?" said he, leaning toward his colleague.

"Send for the man," he replied in a grave tone.

Several officers retained in the corridor obeyed this order. The judges stood, examining the sketch. As for me, I had dropped on my bed of straw, my head between my knees, perfectly exhausted.

Soon steps were heard echoing under the archway. Those who have never awaited the hour of deliverance and counted the minutes, which seem like centuries—those who have never experienced the sharp emotion of outrage, terror, hope, and doubt—can have no conception of the inward chills that I experienced at that moment. I should have distinguished the step of the murderer, walking between the guards, among a thousand others. They approached. The judges themselves

seemed moved. I raised up my head, my heart feeling as if an iron hand had clutched it, and I fixed my eyes upon the closed door. It opened. The man entered. His cheeks were red and swollen, the muscles in his large contracted jaws twitched as far as his ears, and his little restless eyes, yellow like a wolf's, gleamed beneath his heavy yellowish red eyebrows.

Van Spreckdal showed him the sketch in silence.

Then that murderous man, with the large shoulders, having looked, grew pale—then, giving a roar which thrilled us all with terror, he waved his enormous arms, and jumped backward to overthrow the guards. There was a terrible struggle in the corridor; you could hear nothing but the panting breathing of the butcher, his muttered imprecations, and the short words and the shuffling feet of the guard, upon the flagstones.

This lasted only about a minute.

Finally the assassin reentered, with his head hanging down, his eyes bloodshot, and his hands fastened behind his back. He looked again at the picture of the murder; he seemed to reflect, and then, in a low voice, as if talking to himself:

"Who could have seen me," he said, "at midnight?"

I was saved!

. . . . . .

Many years have passed since that terrible adventure. Thank Heaven! I make silhouettes no longer, nor portraits of burgomasters. Through hard work and perseverance, I have conquered my place in the world, and I earn my living honorably by painting works of art—the sole end, in my opinion, to which a true artist should aspire. But the memory of that nocturnal sketch has always remained in my mind. Sometimes, in the midst of work, the thought of it recurs. Then I lay down my palette and dream for hours.

How could a crime committed by a man that I did not know—at a place that I had never seen—have been reproduced by my pencil, in all its smallest details?

Was it chance? No! And moreover, what is chance but the effect of a cause of which we are ignorant?

Was Schiller right when he said: "The immortal soul does not participate in the weaknesses of matter; during the sleep of the body, i

spreads its radiant wings and travels, God knows where! What it then does, no one can say, but inspiration sometimes betrays the secret of its nocturnal wanderings."

Who knows? Nature is more audacious in her realities than man in his most fantastic imaginings.

The Two Drovers

BY SIR WALTER SCOTT

(*1771-1832*)

I

It was the day after Doune Fair when my story commences. It had been a brisk market: several dealers had attended from the northern and midland counties in England, and English money had flown so merrily about as to gladden the hearts of the Highland farmers. Many large droves were about to set off for England, under the protection of their owners, or of the topsmen whom they employed in the tedious, laborious, and responsible office of driving the cattle for many hundred miles, from the market where they had been purchased to the fields or farmyards where they were to be fattened for the shambles.

The Highlanders in particular are masters of this difficult trade of driving, which seems to suit them as well as the trade of war. It affords exercise for all their habits of patient endurance and active exertion. They are required to know perfectly the drove-roads, which lie over the wildest tracts of the country, and to avoid as much as possible the highways, which distress the feet of the bullocks, and the turnpikes, which annoy the spirit of the drover; whereas on the broad green or grey track, which leads across the pathless moor, the herd not only move at ease and without taxation, but, if they mind their business, may pick up a mouthful of food by the way. At night, the drovers usually sleep along with their cattle, let the weather be what it will; and many of these hardy men do not once rest under a roof during a journey on foot from Lochaber to Lincolnshire. They are paid very highly, for the trust reposed is of the last importance, as it depends on their prudence, vigilance, and honesty whether the cattle reach the final market in good order, and afford a profit to the grazier. But, as they maintain themselves at their own expense, they are especially

economical in that particular. At the period we speak of, a Highland drover was victualled for his long and toilsome journey with a few handfuls of oatmeal and two or three onions, renewed from time to time, and a ram's horn filled with whisky, which he used regularly, but sparingly, every night and morning. His dirk, or skene-dhu (i.e. black knife), so worn as to be concealed beneath the arm, or by the folds of the plaid was his only weapon, excepting the cudgel with which he directed the movements of the cattle. A Highlander was never so happy as on these occasions. There was a variety in the whole journey which exercised the Celt's natural curiosity and love of motion; there were the constant change of place and scene, the petty adventures incidental to the traffic, and the intercourse with the various farmers, graziers, and traders, intermingled with occasional merry-makings, not the less acceptable to Donald that they were void of expense; and there was the consciousness of superior skill: for the Highlander, a child amongst flocks, is a prince amongst herds, and his natural habits induce him to disdain the shepherd's slothful life, so that he feels nowhere more at home than when following a gallant drove of his country cattle in the character of their guardian.

Of the number who left Doune in the morning, and with the purpose we have described, not a glunamie of them all cocked his bonnet more briskly, or gartered his tartan hose under knee over a pair of more promising spigs (legs), than did Robin Oig M'Combich, called familiarly Robin Oig, that is, Young, or the Lesser, Robin. Though small of stature, as the epithet Oig implies, and not very strongly limbed, he was as light and alert as one of the deer of his mountains. He had an elasticity of step which, in the course of a long march, made many a stout fellow envy him; and the manner in which he busked his plaid and adjusted his bonnet argued a consciousness that so smart a John Highlandman as himself would not pass unnoticed among the Lowland lasses. The ruddy cheek, red lips, and white teeth set off a countenance which had gained by exposure to the weather a healthful and hardy rather than a rugged hue. If Robin Oig did not laugh, or even smile, frequently, as indeed is not the practice among his countrymen, his bright eyes usually gleamed from under his bonnet with an expression of cheerfulness ready to be turned into mirth.

The departure of Robin Oig was an incident in the little town, in and near which he had many friends, male and female. He was a top-

ping person in his way, transacted considerable business on his own behalf, and was entrusted by the best farmers in the Highlands, in preference to any other drover in that district. He might have increased his business to any extent had he condescended to manage it by deputy; but, except a lad or two, sister's sons of his own, Robin rejected the idea of assistance, conscious, perhaps, how much his reputation depended upon his attending in person to the practical discharge of his duty in every instance. He remained, therefore, contented with the highest premium given to persons of his description, and comforted himself with the hopes that a few journeys to England might enable him to conduct business on his own account in a manner becoming his birth. For Robin Oig's father, Lachlan M'Combich, or "son of my friend" (his actual clan surname being M'Gregor), had been so called by the celebrated Rob Roy, because of the particular friendship which had subsisted between the grandsire of Robin and that renowned cateran. Some people even say that Robin Oig derived his Christian name from one as renowned in the wilds of Loch Lomond as ever was his namesake, Robin Hood, in the precincts of merry Sherwood. "Of such ancestry," as James Boswell says, "who would not be proud?" Robin Oig was proud accordingly; but his frequent visits to England and to the Lowlands had given him tact enough to know that pretensions which still gave him a little right to distinction in his own lonely glen might be both obnoxious and ridiculous if preferred elsewhere. The pride of birth, therefore, was like the miser's treasure, the secret subject of his contemplation, but never exhibited to strangers as a subject of boasting.

Many were the words of gratulation and good-luck which were bestowed on Robin Oig. The judges commended his drove, especially Robin's own property, which were the best of them. Some thrust out their snuff-mulls for the parting pinch; others tendered the doch-an-darroch, or parting-cup. All cried: "Good-luck travel out with you and come home with you. Give you luck in the Saxon market—brave notes in the leabhar-dhu (black pocket-book) and plenty of English gold in the sporran" (pouch of goat-skin).

The bonny lasses made their adieus more modestly, and more than one, it was said, would have given her best brooch to be certain that it was upon her that his eye last rested as he turned towards the road.

Robin Oig had just given the preliminary "Hoo—hoo!" to urge forward the loiterers of the drove, when there was a cry behind him.

"Stay, Robin—bide a blink. Here is Janet of Tomahourich—auld Janet, your father's sister."

"Plague on her, for an auld Highland witch and spaewife," said a farmer from the Carse of Stirling; "she'll cast some of her cantrips on the cattle."

"She canna do that," said another sapient of the same profession: "Rogin Oig is no the lad to leave any of them without tying St. Mungo's knot on their tails, and that will put to her speed the best witch that ever flew over Dimayet upon a broomstick."

It may not be indifferent to the reader to know that the Highland cattle are peculiarly liable to be "taken," or infected, by spells and witchcraft, which judicious people guard against by knitting knots of peculiar complexity on the tuft of hair which terminates the animal's tail.

But the old woman who was the object of the farmer's suspicion seemed only busied about the drover, without paying any attention to the drove. Robin, on the contrary, appeared rather impatient of her presence.

"What auld-world fancy," he said, "has brought you so early from the ingle-side this morning, muhme? I am sure I bid you good-even, and had your God-speed, last night."

"And left me more siller than the useless old woman will use till you come back again, bird of my bosom," said the sibyl. "But it is little I would care for the food that nourishes me, or the fire that warms me, or for God's blessed sun itself, if aught but weal should happen to the grandson of my father. So let me walk the deasil round you, that you may go safe out into the far foreign land, and come safe home."

Robin Oig stopped, half-embarrassed, half-laughing, and signing to those around that he only complied with the old woman to soothe her humour. In the meantime, she traced around him, with wavering steps, the propitiation, which some have thought has been derived from the Druidical mythology. It consists, as is well known, in the person who makes the deasil walking three times round the person who is the object of the ceremony, taking care to move according to the course of the sun. At once, however, she stopped short, and exclaimed, in a voice of

alarm and horror: "Grandson of my father, there is blood on your hand."

"Hush, for God's sake, aunt," said Robin Oig; "you will bring more trouble on yourself with this taishataragh (second sight) than you will be able to get out of for many a day."

The old woman only repeated with a ghastly look: "There is blood on your hand, and it is English blood. The blood of the Gael is richer and redder. Let us see—let us—"

Ere Robin Oig could prevent her, which, indeed, could only have been by positive violence, so hasty and peremptory were her proceedings, she had drawn from his side the dirk which lodged in the folds of his plaid, and held it up, exclaiming, although the weapon gleamed clear and bright in the sun: "Blood, blood—Saxon blood again. Robin Oig M'Combich, go not this day to England!"

"Prutt, trutt," answered Robin Oig, "that will never do neither; it would be next thing to running the country. For shame, muhme, give me the dirk. You cannot tell by the colour the difference betwixt the blood of a black bullock and a white one, and you speak of knowing Saxon from Gaelic blood. All men have their blood from Adam, muhme. Give me my skene-dhu, and let me go on my road. I should have been half-way to Stirling brig by this time. Give me my dirk, and let me go."

"Never will I give it to you," said the old woman—"never will I quit my hold on your plaid, unless you promise me not to wear that unhappy weapon."

The women around him urged him also, saying few of his aunt's words fell to the ground; and as the Lowland farmers continued to look moodily on the scene, Robin Oig determined to close it at any sacrifice.

"Well, then," said the young drover, giving the scabbard of the weapon to Hugh Morrison, "you Lowlanders care nothing for these freats. Keep my dirk for me. I cannot give it you, because it was my father's; but your drove follows ours, and I am content it should be in your keeping, not in mine. Will this do, muhme?"

"It must," said the old woman—"that is, if the Lowlander is mad enough to carry the knife."

The strong Westlandman laughed aloud.

"Goodwife," said he, "I am Hugh Morrison from Glenae, come of

the Manly Morrisons of auld langsyne, that never took short weapon against a man in their lives. And neither needed they: they had their broadswords, and I have this bit supple," showing a formidable cudgel; "for dirking ower the board, I leave that to John Highlandman. Ye needna snort, none of you Highlanders, and you in especial, Robin. I'll keep the bit knife, if you are feared for the auld spaewife's tale, and give it back to you whenever you want it."

Robin was not particularly pleased with some part of Hugh Morrison's speech; but he had learned in his travels more patience than belonged to his Highland constitution originally, and he accepted the service of the descendant of the Manly Morrisons, without finding fault with the rather depreciating manner in which it was offered.

"If he had not had his morning in his head, and been but a Dumfriesshire hog into the boot, he would have spoken more like a gentleman. But you cannot have more of a sow than a grumph. It's shame my father's knife should ever slash a haggis for the like of him."

Thus saying, but saying it in Gaelic, Robin drove on his cattle, and waved farewell to all behind him. He was in the greater haste, because he expected to join at Falkirk a comrade and brother in profession, with whom he proposed to travel in company.

Robin Oig's chosen friend was a young Englishman, Harry Wakefield by name, well known at every northern market, and in his way as much famed and honoured as our Highland driver of bullocks. He was nearly six feet high, gallantly formed to keep the rounds at Smithfield, or maintain the ring at a wrestling-match; and although he might have been over-matched, perhaps, among the regular professors of the fancy, yet, as a yokel or rustic, or a chance customer, he was able to give a bellyful to any amateur of the pugilistic art. Doncaster races saw him in his glory, betting his guinea, and generally successfully; nor was there a main fought in Yorkshire, the feeders being persons of celebrity, at which he was not to be seen, if business permitted. But though a "sprack" lad, and fond of pleasure and its haunts, Harry Wakefield was steady, and not the cautious Robin Oig M'Combich himself was more attentive to the main chance. His holidays were holidays indeed; but his days of work were dedicated to steady and persevering labour. In countenance and temper, Wakefield was the model of Old England's merry yeomen, whose cloth-yard shafts, in so many hundred battles, asserted her superiority over the nations, and

whose good sabres, in our own time, are her cheapest and most assured defence. His mirth was readily excited; for, strong in limb and constitution, and fortunate in circumstances, he was disposed to be pleased with everything about him; and such difficulties as he might occasionally encounter were, to a man of his energy, rather matter of amusement than serious annoyance. With all the merits of a sanguine temper, our young English drover was not without his defects. He was irascible, sometimes to the verge of being quarrelsome; and perhaps not the less inclined to bring his disputes to a pugilistic decision, because he found few antagonists able to stand up to him in the boxing-ring.

It is difficult to say how Harry Wakefield and Robin Oig first became intimates; but it is certain a close acquaintance had taken place betwixt them, although they had apparently few common subjects of conversation or of interest, so soon as their talk ceased to be of bullocks. Robin Oig, indeed, spoke the English language rather imperfectly upon any other topics but stots and kyloes, and Harry Wakefield could never bring his broad Yorkshire tongue to utter a single word of Gaelic. It was in vain Robin spent a whole morning, during a walk over Minch Moor, in attempting to teach his companion to utter, with true precision, the shibboleth llhu, which is the Gaelic for a calf. From Traquair to Murder cairn, the hill rung with the discordant attempts of the Saxon upon the unmanageable monosyllable, and the heartfelt laugh which followed every failure. They had, however, better modes of awakening the echoes; for Wakefield could sing many a ditty to the praise of Moll, Susan, and Cicely, and Robin Oig had a particular gift at whistling interminable pibrochs through all their involutions, and, what was more agreeable to his companion's southern ear, knew many of the northern airs, both lively and pathetic, to which Wakefield learned to pipe a bass. Thus, though Robin could hardly have comprehended his companion's stories about horse-racing, and cock-fighting, or fox-hunting, and although his own legends of clan-fights and creaghs, varied with talk of Highland goblins and fairy folk, would have been caviare to his companion, they contrived nevertheless to find a degree of pleasure in each other's company, which had for three years back induced them to join company and travel together, when the direction of their journey permitted. Each, indeed, found his advantage in this companionship; for where could the Englishman

have found a guide through the Western Highlands like Robin Oig M'Combich? and when they were on what Harry called the *right* side of the Border, his patronage, which was extensive, and his purse, which was heavy, were at all times at the service of his Highland friend, and on many occasions his liberality did him genuine yeoman's service.

II

Were ever two such loving friends!—
How could they disagree?
Oh, thus it was, he loved him dear,
And thought how to requite him,
And having no friend left but he,
He did resolve to fight him.
—*Duke upon Duke.*

The pair of friends had traversed with their usual cordiality the grassy wilds of Liddesdale, and crossed the opposite part of Cumberland, emphatically called The Waste. In these solitary regions the cattle under the charge of our drovers derived their subsistence chiefly by picking their food as they went along the drove-road, or sometimes by the tempting opportunity of a "start and owerloup," or invasion of the neighbouring pasture, where an occasion presented itself. But now the scene changed before them; they were descending towards a fertile and inclosed country, where no such liberties could be taken with impunity, or without a previous arrangement and bargain with the possessors of the ground. This was more especially the case, as a great northern fair was upon the eve of taking place, where both the Scotch and English drover expected to dispose of a part of their cattle, which it was desirable to produce in the market rested and in good order. Fields were therefore difficult to be obtained, and only upon high terms. This necessity occasioned a temporary separation betwixt the two friends who went to bargain, each as he could, for the separate accommodation of his herd. Unhappily it chanced that both of them, unknown to each other, thought of bargaining for the ground they wanted on the property of a country gentleman of some fortune, whose estate lay in the neighbourhood. The English drover applied to the bailiff on the property, who was known to him. It chanced that the Cumbrian squire, who had entertained some suspicions of his manager's honesty, was taking occasional measures to ascertain how far they were well

founded, and had desired that any inquiries about his inclosures, with a view to occupy them for a temporary purpose, should be referred to himself. As, however, Mr. Ireby had gone the day before upon a journey of some miles' distance to the northward, the bailiff chose to consider the check upon his full powers as for the time removed, and concluded that he should best consult his master's interest, and perhaps his own, in making an agreement with Harry Wakefield.

Meanwhile, ignorant of what his comrade was doing, Robin Oig, on his side, chanced to be overtaken by a good-looking, smart little man upon a pony, most knowingly hogged and cropped, as was then the fashion, the rider wearing tight leather breeches and long-necked bright spurs. This cavalier asked one or two pertinent questions about markets and the price of stock. So Robin, seeing him a well-judging, civil gentleman, took the freedom to ask him whether he could let him know if there was any grass-land to be let in that neighbourhood, for the temporary accommodation of his drove. He could not have put the question to more willing ears. The gentleman of the buckskins was the proprietor with whose bailiff Harry Wakefield had dealt, or was in the act of dealing.

"Thou art in good luck, my canny Scot," said Mr. Ireby, "to have spoken to me, for I see thy cattle have done their day's work, and I have at my disposal the only field within three miles that is to be let in these parts."

"The drove can pe gang two, three, four miles very pretty weel indeed," said the cautious Highlander; "put what would his honour pe axing for the peasts pe the head, if she was to tak the park for twa or three days?"

"We won't differ, Sawney, if you let me have six stots for winterers, in the way of reason."

"And which peasts wad your honour pe for having?"

"Why, let me see—the two black—the dun one—yon doddy —him with the twisted horn—the brockit. How much by the head?"

"Ah," said Robin, "your honour is a shudge—a real shudge; I couldna have set off the pest six peasts petter mysell, me that ken them as if they were my pairns, puir things."

"Well, how much per head, Sawney," continued Mr. Ireby.

"It was high markets at Doune and Falkirk," answered Robin.

And thus the conversation proceeded, until they had agreed on the

just price for the bullocks, the squire throwing in the temporary accommodation of the inclosure for the cattle into the boot, and Robin making, as he thought, a very good bargain, provided the grass was but tolerable. The squire walked his pony alongside of the drove, partly to show him the way, and see him put into possession of the field, and partly to learn the latest news of the northern markets.

They arrived at the field, and the pasture seemed excellent. But what was their surprise when they saw the bailiff quietly inducting the cattle of Harry Wakefield into the grassy goshen which had just been assigned to those of Robin Oig M'Combich by the proprietor himself! Squire Ireby set spurs to his horse, dashed up to his servant, and learning what had passed between the parties, briefly informed the English drover that his bailiff had let the ground without his authority, and that he might seek grass for his cattle wherever he would, since he was to get none there. At the same time he rebuked his servant severely for having transgressed his commands, and ordered him instantly to assist in ejecting the hungry and weary cattle of Harry Wakefield, which were just beginning to enjoy a meal of unusual plenty, and to introduce those of his comrade, whom the English drover now began to consider as a rival.

The feelings which arose in Wakefield's mind would have induced him to resist Mr. Ireby's decision; but every Englishman has a tolerably accurate sense of law and justice, and John Fleecebumpkin, the bailiff, having acknowledged that he had exceeded his commission, Wakefield saw nothing else for it than to collect his hungry and disappointed charge, and drive them on to seek quarters elsewhere. Robin Oig saw what had happened with regret, and hastened to offer to his English friend to share with him the disputed possession. But Wakefield's pride was severely hurt, and he answered disdainfully, "Take it all, man—take it all; never make two bites of a cherry. Thou canst talk over the gentry, and blear a plain man's eye. Out upon you, man; I would not kiss any man's dirty latchets for leave to bake in his oven."

Robin Oig, sorry but not surprised at his comrade's displeasure, hastened to entreat his friend to wait but an hour till he had gone to the squire's house to receive payment for the cattle he had sold, and he would come back and help him to drive the cattle into some con-

venient place of rest, and explain to him the whole mistake they had both of them fallen into.

But the Englishman continued indignant. "Thou hast been selling, hast thou? Ay—ay, thou is a cunning lad for kenning the hours of bargaining. Go to the devil with thyself, for I will ne'er see thy fause loon's visage again; thou should be ashamed to look me in the face."

"I am ashamed to look no man in the face," said Robin Oig, something moved; "and moreover, I will look you in the face this blessed day, if you will bide at the clachan down yonder."

"Mayhap you had as well keep away," said his comrade; and turning his back on his former friend, he collected his unwilling associates, assisted by the bailiff, who took some real and some affected interest in seeing Wakefield accommodated.

After spending some time in negotiating with more than one of the neighbouring farmers, who could not, or would not, afford the accommodation desired, Harry Wakefield at last, and in his necessity, accomplished his point by means of the landlord of the alehouse at which Robin Oig and he had agreed to pass the night, when they first separated from each other. Mine host was content to let him turn his cattle on a piece of barren moor, at a price little less than the bailiff had asked for the disputed inclosure; and the wretchedness of the pasture, as well as the price paid for it, were set down as exaggerations of the breach of faith and friendship of his Scottish crony. This turn of Wakefield's passions was encouraged by the bailiff, who had his own reasons for being offended against poor Robin, as having been the unwitting cause of his falling into disgrace with his master, as well as by the innkeeper, and two or three chance guests, who stimulated the drover in his resentment against his quondam associate—some from the ancient grudge against the Scots, which, when it exists anywhere, is to be found lurking in the Border counties, and some from the general love of mischief, which characterises mankind in all ranks of life, to the honour of Adam's children be it spoken. Good John Barleycorn also, who always heightens and exaggerates the prevailing passions, be they angry or kindly, was not wanting in his offices on this occasion; and confusion to false friends and hard masters was pledged in more than one tankard.

In the meanwhile, Mr. Ireby found some amusement in detaining the northern drover at his ancient hall. He caused a cold round of

beef to be placed before the Scot in the butler's pantry, together with a foaming tankard of home-brewed, and took pleasure in seeing the hearty appetite with which these unwonted edibles were discussed by Robin Oig M'Combich. The squire himself, lighting his pipe, compounded between his patrician dignity and his love of agricultural gossip, by walking up and down while he conversed with his guest.

"I passed another drove," said the squire, "with one of your countrymen behind them; they were something less beasts than your drove, doddies most of them; a big man was with them—none of your kilts though, but a decent pair of breeches. D'ye know who he may be?"

"Hout aye, that might, could, and would be Hughie Morrison; I didna think he could hae peen sae weel up. He has made a day on us; but his Argyleshires will have wearied shanks. How far was he pehind?"

"I think about six or seven miles," answered the squire, "for I passed them at the Christenbury Crag, and I overtook you at the Hollan Bush. If his beasts be leg-weary, he will be maybe selling bargains."

"Na—na, Hughie Morrison is no the man for pargains; ye maun come to some Highland body like Robin Oig hersell for the like of these. Put I maun pe wishing you goot-night, and twenty of them let alane ane, and I maun down to the clachan to see if the lad Harry Waakfelt is out of his humdudgeons yet."

The party at the alehouse were still in full talk, and the treachery of Robin Oig still the theme of conversation, when the supposed culprit entered the apartment. His arrival, as usually happens in such a case, put an instant stop to the discussion of which he had furnished the subject, and he was received by the company assembled with that chilling silence which, more than a thousand exclamations, tells an intruder that he is unwelcome. Surprised and offended, but not appalled, by the reception which he experienced, Robin entered with an undaunted and even a haughty air, attempted no greeting, as he saw he was received with none, and placed himself by the side of the fire, a little apart from a table at which Harry Wakefield, the bailiff, and two or three other persons were seated. The ample Cumbrian kitchen would have afforded plenty of room, even for a larger separation.

Robin, thus seated, proceeded to light his pipe and call for a pint of twopenny.

"We have no twopence ale," answered Ralph Heskett, the landlord; "but, as thou find'st thy own tobacco, it's like thou mayst find thy own liquor too; it's the wont of thy country, I wot."

"Shame, goodman," said the landlady, a blythe, bustling housewife, hastening herself to supply the guest with liquor. "Thou knowest well enow what the strange man wants, and it's thy trade to be civil, man. Thou shouldst know, that if the Scot likes a small pot, he pays a sure penny."

Without taking any notice of this nuptial dialogue, the Highlander took the flagon in his hand, and addressing the company generally, drank the interesting toast of "Good markets," to the party assembled.

"The better that the wind blew fewer dealers from the north," said one of the farmers, "and fewer Highland runts to eat up the English meadows."

"Saul of my pody, put you are wrang there, my friend," answered Robin, with composure; "it is your fat Englishmen that eat up our Scots cattle, puir things."

"I wish there was a summat to eat up their drovers," said another; "a plain Englishman canna make bread with a kenning of them."

"Or an honest servant keep his master's favour, but they will come sliding in between him and the sunshine," said the bailiff.

"If these pe jokes," said Robin Oig, with the same composure, "there is ower mony jokes upon one man."

"It is no joke, but downright earnest," said the bailiff. "Harkye, Mr. Robin Ogg, or whatever is your name, it's right we should tell you that we are all of one opinion, and that is, that you, Mr. Robin Ogg, have behaved to our friend, Mr. Harry Wakefield here, like a raff and a blackguard."

"Nae doubt—nae doubt," answered Robin, with great composure; "and you are a set of very pretty judges, for whose prains or pehaviour I wad not gie a pinch of sneeshing. If Mr. Harry Waakfelt kens where he is wranged, he kens where he may be righted."

"He speaks truth," said Wakefield, who had listened to what passed, divided between the offence which he had taken at Robin's late behaviour and the revival of his habitual feelings of regard.

He now rose and went towards Robin, who got up from his seat as he approached, and held out his hand.

"That's right, Harry—go it—serve him out," resounded on all sides —"tip him the nailer—show him the mill."

"Hold your peace all of you, and be—," said Wakefield; and then addressing his comrade, he took him by the extended hand, with something alike of respect and defiance. "Robin," he said, "thou hast used me ill enough this day; but if you mean, like a frank fellow, to shake hands, and take a tussle for love on the sod, why, I'll forgive thee, man, and we shall be better friends than ever."

"And would it no pe petter to pe cood friends without more of the matter?" said Robin; "we will be much petter friendships with our panes hale than proken."

Harry Wakefield dropped the hand of his friend, or rather threw it from him.

"I did not think I had been keeping company for three years with a coward."

"Coward pelongs to none of my name," said Robin, whose eyes began to kindle, but keeping the command of his temper. "It was no coward's legs or hands, Harry Waakfelt, that drew you out of the fords of Frew, when you was drifting ower the plack rock, and every eel in the river expected his share of you."

"And that is true enough, too," said the Englishman, struck by the appeal.

"Adzooks!" exclaimed the bailiff; "sure Harry Wakefield, the nattiest lad at Whitson Tryste, Wooler Fair, Carlisle Sands, or Stagshaw Bank, is not going to show white feather? Ah, this comes of living so long with kilts and bonnets; men forget the use of their daddles."

"I may teach you, Master Fleecebumpkin, that I have not lost the use of mine," said Wakefield, and then went on: "This will never do, Robin. We must have a turn-up, or we shall be the talk of the countryside. I'll be d—d if I hurt thee. I'll put on the gloves gin thou like. Come, stand forward like a man."

"To be peaten like a dog," said Robin; "is there any reason in that? If you think I have done you wrong, I'll go before your shudge, though I neither know his law nor his language."

A general cry of "No, no—no law, no lawyer! A bellyful and be friends!" was echoed by the bystanders.

"But," continued Robin, "if I am to fight, I have no skill to fight like a jackanapes, with hands and nails."

"How would you fight, then?" said his antagonist; "though I am thinking it would be hard to bring you to the scratch anyhow."

"I would fight with proadswords, and sink point on the first plood drawn, like a gentlemans."

A loud shout of laughter followed the proposal, which indeed had rather escaped from poor Robin's swelling heart than been the dictate of his sober judgment.

"Gentleman, quotha!" was echoed on all sides, with a shout of unextinguishable laughter; "a very pretty gentleman, God wot. Canst get two swords for the gentleman to fight with, Ralph Heskett?"

"No, but I can send to the armoury at Carlisle, and lend them two forks, to be making shift with in the meantime."

"Tush, man," said another, "the bonny Scots come into the world with the blue bonnet on their heads, and dirk and pistol at their belt."

"Best send post," said Mr. Fleecebumpkin, "to the squire of Corby Castle, to come and stand second to the *gentleman*."

In the midst of this torrent of general ridicule, the Highlander instinctively griped beneath the folds of his plaid.

"But it's better not," he said in his own language. "A hundred curses on the swine-eaters, who know neither decency nor civility!"

"Make room, the pack of you," he said, advancing to the door.

But his former friend interposed his sturdy bulk, and opposed his leaving the house; and when Robin Oig attempted to make his way by force, he hit him down on the floor, with as much ease as a boy bowls down a ninepin.

"A ring—a ring!" was now shouted, until the dark rafters, and the hams that hung on them, trembled again, and the very platters on the "bink" clattered against each other. "Well done, Harry"—"Give it him home, Harry"—"Take care of him now, he sees his own blood!"

Such were the exclamations, while the Highlander, starting from the ground, all his coldness and caution lost in frantic rage, sprung at his antagonist with the fury, the activity, and the vindictive purpose of an incensed tiger-cat. But when could rage encounter science and temper? Robin Oig again went down in the unequal contest; and as the blow was necessarily a severe one, he lay motionless on the floor of the kitchen.

The landlady ran to offer some aid; but Mr. Fleecebumpkin would not permit her to approach. "Let him alone," he said, "he will come to within time, and come up to the scratch again. He has not got half his broth yet."

"He has got all I mean to give him, though," said his antagonist, whose heart began to relent towards his old associate; "and I would rather by half give the rest to yourself, Mr. Fleecebumpkin, for you pretend to know a thing or two, and Robin had not art enough even to peel before setting to, but fought with his plaid dangling about him. Stand up, Robin, my man, all friends now, and let me hear the man that will speak a word against you, or your country, for your sake."

Robin Oig was still under the dominion of his passion, and eager to renew the onset; but being withheld on the one side by the peace-making Dame Heskett, and on the other aware that Wakefield no longer meant to renew the combat, his fury sunk into gloomy sullenness.

"Come—come, never grudge so much at it, man," said the brave-spirited Englishman, with the placability of his country; "shake hands, and we will be better friends than ever."

"Friends!" exclaimed Robin Oig with strong emphasis—"friends! Never. Look to yourself, Harry Waakfelt."

"Then the curse of Cromwell on your proud Scots stomach, as the man says in the play, and you may do your worst, and be d—d; for one man can say nothing more to another after a tussle, than that he is sorry for it."

On these terms the friends parted. Robin Oig drew out in silence a piece of money, threw it on the table, and then left the alehouse. But, turning at the door, he shook his hand at Wakefield, pointing with his forefinger upwards, in a manner which might imply either a threat or a caution. He then disappeared in the moonlight.

Some words passed after his departure between the bailiff, who piqued himself on being a little of a bully, and Harry Wakefield, who, with generous inconsistency, was now not indisposed to begin a new combat in defence of Robin Oig's reputation, "although he could not use his daddles like an Englishman, as it did not come natural to him."

But Dame Heskett prevented this second quarrel from coming to a head by her peremptory interference. "There should be no more fighting in her house," she said; "there had been too much already. And

you, Mr. Wakefield, may live to learn," she added, "what it is to make a deadly enemy out of a good friend."

"Pshaw, dame! Robin Oig is an honest fellow, and will never keep malice."

"Do not trust to that: you do not know the dour temper of the Scots though you have dealt with them so often. I have a right to know them, my mother being a Scot."

"And so is well seen on her daughter," said Ralph Heskett.

This nuptial sarcasm gave the discourse another turn; fresh customers entered the taproom or kitchen, and others left it. The conversation turned on the expected markets, and the reports of prices from different parts both of Scotland and England; treaties were commenced, and Harry Wakefield was lucky enough to find a chap for a part of his drove, and at a very considerable profit—an event of consequence more than sufficient to blot out all remembrances of the unpleasant scuffle in the earlier part of the day.

But there remained one party from whose mind that recollection could not have been wiped away by the possession of every head of cattle betwixt Esk and Eden. This was Robin Oig M'Combich. "That I should have had no weapon," he said, "and for the first time in my life! Blighted be the tongue that bids the Highlander part with the dirk. The dirk hae! the English blood! My muhme's word—when did her word fall to the ground?"

The recollection of the fatal prophecy confirmed the deadly intention which instantly sprang up in his mind.

"Ha! Morrison cannot be many miles behind; and if it were an hundred, what then?"

His impetuous spirit had now a fixed purpose and motive of action and he turned the light foot of his country towards the wilds, through which he knew, by Mr. Ireby's report, that Morrison was advancing. His mind was wholly engrossed by the sense of injury—injury sustained from a friend, and by the desire of vengeance on one whom he now accounted his most bitter enemy. The treasured ideas of self-importance and self-opinion—of ideal birth and quality, had become more precious to him, like the hoard to the miser, because he could only enjoy them in secret. But that hoard was pillaged; the idols which he had secretly worshipped had been desecrated and profaned. Insulted, abused, and beaten, he was no longer worthy, in his own opinion, of

the name he bore, or the lineage which he belonged to; nothing was left to him—nothing but revenge; and, as the reflection added a galling spur to every step, he determined it should be as sudden and signal as the offence.

When Robin Oig left the door of the alehouse, seven or eight English miles at least lay betwixt Morrison and him. The advance of the former was slow, limited by the sluggish pace of his cattle; the last left behind him stubble-field and hedgerow, crag and dark heath, all glittering with frost-rime in the broad November moonlight, at the rate of six miles an hour. And now the distant lowing of Morrison's cattle is heard; and now they are seen creeping like moles in size and slowness of motion on the broad face of the moor; and now he meets them, passes them, and stops their conductor.

"May good betide us," said the Southlander. "Is this you, Robin M'Combich, or your wraith?"

"It is Robin Oig M'Combich," answered the Highlander, "and it is not. But never mind that, put pe giving me the skene-dhu."

"What, you are for back to the Highlands! The devil! Have you selt all off before the fair? This beats all for quick markets."

"I have not sold—I am not going north. May pe I will never go north again. Give me pack my dirk, Hugh Morrison, or there will pe words petween us."

"Indeed, Robin, I'll be better advised before I gie it back to you; it is a wanchancy weapon in a Highlandman's hand, and I am thinking you will be about some barns-breaking."

"Prutt, trutt! let me have my weapon," said Robin Oig, impatiently.

"Hooly and fairly," said his well-meaning friend. "I'll tell you what will do better than these dirking doings. Ye ken Highlander, and Lowlander, and Bordermen are a' ae man's bairns when you are over the Scots dyke. See, the Eskdale callants, and fighting Charlie of Liddesdale, and the Lockerby lads, and the four Dandies of Lustruther, and a ween mair grey plaids are coming up behind; and if you are wranged, there is the hand of a Manly Morrison, we'll see you righted, if Carlisle and Stanwix baith took up the feud."

"To tell you the truth," said Robin Oig, desirous of eluding the suspicions of his friend, "I have enlisted with a party of the Black Watch, and must march off tomorrow morning."

"Enlisted! Were you mad or drunk? You must buy yourself off.

I can lend you twenty notes, and twenty to that, if the drove sell."

"I thank you—thank ye, Hughie; but I go with good-will the gate that I am going; so the dirk—the dirk!"

"There it is for you then, since less wunna serve. But think on what I was saying. Waes me, it will be sair news in the braes of Balquidder, that Robin Oig M'Combich should have run an ill gate, and ta'en on."

"Ill news in Balquidder, indeed!" echoed poor Robin; "but Cot speed you, Hughie, and send you good marcats. Ye winna meet with Robin Oig again, either at tryste or fair."

So saying, he shook hastily the hand of his acquaintance, and set in the direction from which he had advanced, with the spirit of his former pace.

"There is something wrang with the lad," muttered the Morrison to himself; "but we will maybe see better into it the morn's morning."

But long ere the morning dawned, the catastrophe of our tale had taken place. It was two hours after the affray had happened, and it was totally forgotten by almost every one, when Robin Oig returned to Heskett's inn. The place was filled at once by various sorts of men and with noises corresponding to their character. There were the grave low sounds of men engaged in busy traffic, with the laugh, the song, and the riotous jest of those who had nothing to do but to enjoy themselves. Among the last was Harry Wakefield, who, amidst a grinning group of smock-frocks, hobnailed shoes, and jolly English physiognomies, was trolling forth the old ditty,

"What though my name be Roger,
Who drives the plough and cart—"

when he was interrupted by a well-known voice saying in a high and stern voice, marked by the sharp Highland accent, "Harry Waakfelt, if you be a man, stand up!"

"What is the matter?—what is it?" the guests demanded of each other.

"It is only a d—d Scotsman," said Fleecebumpkin, who was by this time very drunk, "whom Harry Wakefield helped to his broth today, who is now come to have his cauld kail het again."

"Harry Waakfelt," repeated the same ominous summons, "stand up, if you be a man!"

There is something in the tone of deep and concentrated passion which attracts attention and imposes awe, even by the very sound. The guests shrunk back on every side, and gazed at the Highlander as he stood in the middle of them, his brows bent, and his features rigid with resolution.

"I will stand up with all my heart, Robin, my boy, but it shall be to shake hands with you, and drink down all unkindness. It is not the fault of your heart, man, that you don't know how to clench your hands."

By this time he stood opposite to his antagonist; his open and unsuspecting look strangely contrasted with the stern purpose which gleamed wild, dark, and vindictive in the eyes of the Highlander.

" 'Tis not thy fault, man, that, not having the luck to be an Englishman, thou canst not fight more than a school-girl."

"I *can* fight," answered Robin Oig, sternly but calmly, "and you shall know it. You, Harry Waakfelt, showed me today how the Saxon churls fight; I show you now how the Highland duinie-wassel fights."

He seconded the word with the action, and plunged the dagger, which he suddenly displayed, into the broad breast of the English yeoman, with such fatal certainty and force that the hilt made a hollow sound against the breast-bone, and the double-edged point split the very heart of his victim. Harry Wakefield fell and expired with a single groan. His assassin next seized the bailiff by the collar, and offered the bloody poniard to his throat, whilst dread and surprise rendered the man incapable of defence.

"It were very just to lay you beside him," he said, "but the blood of a base pickthank shall never mix on my father's dirk with that of a brave man."

As he spoke, he cast the man from him with so much force that he fell on the floor, while Robin, with his other hand, threw the fatal weapon into the blazing turf-fire.

"There," he said, "take me who likes, and let fire cleanse blood if it can."

The cause of astonishment still continuing, Robin Oig asked for a peace-officer, and a constable having stepped out, he surrendered himself to his custody.

"A bloody night's work you have made of it," said the constable.

"Your own fault," said the Highlander. "Had you kept his hands

off me twa hours since, he would have been now as well and merry as he was twa minutes since."

"It must be sorely answered," said the peace-officer.

"Never you mind that. Death pays all debts; it will pay that too."

The horror of the bystanders began now to give way to indignation; and the sight of a favorite companion murdered in the midst of them, the provocation being, in their opinion, so utterly inadequate to the excess of vengeance, might have induced them to kill the perpetrator of the deed even upon the very spot. The constable, however, did his duty on this occasion, and, with the assistance of some of the more reasonable persons present, procured horses to guard the prisoner to Carlisle, to abide his doom at the next assizes. While the escort was preparing, the prisoner neither expressed the least interest nor attempted the slightest reply. Only, before he was carried from the fatal apartment, he desired to look at the dead body, which, raised from the floor, had been deposited upon the large table (at the head of which Harry Wakefield had presided but a few minutes before, full of life, vigour, and animation), until the surgeons should examine the mortal wound. The face of the corpse was decently covered with a napkin. To the surprise and horror of the bystanders, which displayed itself in a general "Ah!" drawn through clenched teeth and half-shut lips, Robin Oig removed the cloth, and gazed with a mournful but steady eye on the lifeless visage, which had been so lately animated, that the smile of good-humoured confidence in his own strength, of conciliation at once and contempt towards his enemy, still curled his lip. While those present expected that the wound, which had so lately flooded the apartment with gore, would send forth fresh streams at the touch of the homicide, Robin Oig replaced the covering with the brief exclamation, "He was a pretty man!"

My story is nearly ended. The unfortunate Highlander stood his trial at Carlisle. I was myself present, and as a young Scottish lawyer, or barrister at least, and reputed a man of some quality, the politeness of the sheriff of Cumberland offered me a place on the bench. The facts of the case were proved in the manner I have related them; and whatever might be at first the prejudice of the audience against a crime so un-English as that of assassination from revenge, yet when the rooted national prejudices of the prisoner had been explained,

which made him consider himself as stained with indelible dishonour when subjected to personal violence, when his previous patience, moderation, and endurance were considered, the generosity of the English audience was inclined to regard his crime as the wayward aberration of a false idea of honour rather than as flowing from a heart naturally savage, or perverted by habitual vice. I shall never forget the charge of the venerable judge to the jury. . . . He concluded: "I repeat that this unhappy man ought personally to be the object rather of our pity than our abhorrence, for he failed in his ignorance and from mistaken notions of honor. But his crime is not the less that of murder, gentlemen, and, in your high and important office, it is your duty so to find. Englishmen have their angry passions as well as Scots; and should this man's action remain unpunished, you may unsheath, under various pretences, a thousand daggers betwixt the Land's End and the Orkneys."

The jury, according to the judge's instructions, brought in a verdict of Guilty; and Robin Oig M'Combich, alias M'Gregor, was sentenced to death, and left for execution, which took place accordingly. He met his fate with great firmness, and acknowledged the justice of his sentence. But he repelled indignantly the observations of those who accused him of attacking an unarmed man. "I give a life for the life I took," he said, "and what can I do more?"

The Snowstorm

BY ALEXANDER PUSHKIN

(*1799-1837*)

Towards the end of the year 1811, a memorable period for us, the good Gavril Gavrilovitch R—— was living on his domain of Nenaradova. He was celebrated throughout the district for his hospitality and kind-heartedness. The neighbours were constantly visiting him: some to eat and drink; some to play at five copeck "Boston" with his wife, Praskovia Petrovna; and some to look at their daughter, Maria Gavrilovna, a pale, slender girl of seventeen. She was considered a wealthy match, and many desired her for themselves or for their sons.

Maria Gavrilovna had been brought up on French novels, and consequently was in love. The object of her choice was a poor sub-lieutenant in the army, who was then on leave of absence in his village. It need scarcely be mentioned that the young man returned her passion with equal ardour, and that the parents of his beloved one, observing their mutual inclination, forbade their daughter to think of him, and received him worse than a discharged assessor.

Our lovers corresponded with one another and daily saw each other alone in the little pine wood or near the old chapel. There they exchanged vows of eternal love, lamented their cruel fate, and formed various plans. Corresponding and conversing in this way, they arrived quite naturally at the following conclusion:

If we cannot exist without each other, and the will of hard-hearted parents stands in the way of our happiness, why cannot we do without them?

Needless to mention that this happy idea originated in the mind of the young man, and that it was very congenial to the romantic imagination of Maria Gavrilovna.

The winter came and put a stop to their meetings, but their cor-

respondence became all the more active. Vladimir Nikolaievitch in every letter implored her to give herself up to him, to get married secretly, to hide for some time, and then throw themselves at the feet of their parents, who would, without any doubt, be touched at last by the heroic constancy and unhappiness of the lovers, and would infallibly say to them: "Children, come to our arms!"

Maria Gavrilovna hesitated for a long time, and several plans for a flight were rejected. At last she consented: on the appointed day she was not to take supper, but was to retire to her room under the pretext of a headache. Her maid was in the plot; they were both to go into the garden by the back stairs, and behind the garden they would find ready a sledge, into which they were to get, and then drive straight to the church of Jadrino, a village about five versts from Nenaradova, where Vladimir would be waiting for them.

On the eve of the decisive day, Maria Gavrilovna did not sleep the whole night; she packed and tied up her linen and other articles of apparel, wrote a long letter to a sentimental young lady, a friend of hers, and another to her parents. She took leave of them in the most touching terms, urged the invincible strength of passion as an excuse for the step she was taking, and wound up with the assurance that she should consider it the happiest moment of her life, when she should be allowed to throw herself at the feet of her dear parents.

After having sealed both letters with a Toula seal, upon which were engraved two flaming hearts with a suitable inscription, she threw herself upon her bed just before daybreak, and dozed off: but even then she was constantly being awakened by terrible dreams. First it seemed to her that at the very moment when she seated herself in the sledge, in order to go and get married, her father stopped her, dragged her over the snow with fearful rapidity, and threw her into a dark bottomless abyss, down which she fell headlong with an indescribable sinking of the heart. Then she saw Vladimir lying on the grass, pale and bloodstained. With his dying breath he implored her in a piercing voice to make haste and marry him. . . . Other fantastic and senseless visions floated before her one after another. At last she arose, paler than usual, and with an unfeigned headache. Her father and mother observed her uneasiness; their tender solicitude and incessant inquiries: "What is the matter with you, Masha? Are you ill, Masha?"

cut her to the heart. She tried to reassure them and to appear cheerful, but in vain.

The evening came. The thought, that this was the last day she would pass in the bosom of her family, weighed upon her heart. She was more dead than alive. In secret she took leave of everybody, of all the objects that surrounded her.

Supper was served; her heart began to beat violently. In a trembling voice she declared that she did not want any supper, and then took leave of her father and mother. They kissed her and blessed her as usual, and she could hardly restrain herself from weeping.

On reaching her own room, she threw herself into a chair and burst into tears. Her maid urged her to be calm and to take courage. Everything was ready. In half an hour Masha would leave for ever her parents' house, her room, and her peaceful girlish life. . . .

Out in the courtyard the snow was falling heavily; the wind howled, the shutters shook and rattled, and everything seemed to her to portend misfortune.

Soon all was quiet in the house: everyone was asleep. Masha wrapped herself in a shawl, put on a warm cloak, took her small box in her hand, and went down the back staircase. Her maid followed her with two bundles. They descended into the garden. The snowstorm had not subsided; the wind blew in their faces, as if trying to stop the young criminal. With difficulty they reached the end of the garden. In the road a sledge awaited them. The horses, half-frozen with the cold, would not keep still; Vladimir's coachman was walking up and down in front of them, trying to restrain their impatience. He helped the young lady and her maid into the sledge, placed the box and the bundles in the vehicle, seized the reins, and the horses dashed off.

Having intrusted the young lady to the care of fate and to the skill of Tereshka the coachman, we will return to our young lover.

Vladimir had spent the whole of the day in driving about. In the morning he paid a visit to the priest of Jadrino, and having come to an agreement with him after a great deal of difficulty, he then set out to seek for witnesses among the neighbouring landowners. The first to whom he presented himself, a retired cornet of about forty years of age, and whose name was Dravin, consented with pleasure. The adventure, he declared, reminded him of his young days and his pranks

in the Hussars. He persuaded Vladimir to stay to dinner with him, and assured him that he would have no difficulty in finding the other two witnesses. And, indeed, immediately after dinner, appeared the surveyor Schmidt, with moustache and spurs, and the son of the captain of police, a lad of sixteen years of age, who had recently entered the Uhlans. They not only accepted Vladimir's proposal, but even vowed that they were ready to sacrifice their lives for him. Vladimir embraced them with rapture, and returned home to get everything ready.

It had been dark for some time. He dispatched his faithful Tereshka to Nenaradova with his sledge and with detailed instructions, and ordered for himself the small sledge with one horse, and set out alone, without any coachman, for Jadrino, where Maria Gavrilovna ought to arrive in about a couple of hours. He knew the road well, and the journey would only occupy about twenty minutes altogether.

But scarcely had Vladimir issued from the paddock into the open field, when the wind rose and such a snowstorm came on that he could sée nothing. In one minute the road was completely hidden; all surrounding objects disappeared in a thick yellow fog, through which fell the white flakes of snow; earth and sky became confounded. Vladimir found himself in the middle of the field, and tried in vain to find the road again. His horse went on at random, and at every moment kept either stepping into a snowdrift or stumbling into a hole, so that the sledge was constantly being overturned. Vladimir endeavoured not to lose the right direction. But it seemed to him that more than half an hour had already passed, and he had not yet reached the Jadrino wood. Another ten minutes elapsed—still no wood was to be seen. Vladimir drove across a field intersected by deep ditches. The snowstorm did not abate, the sky did not become any clearer. The horse began to grow tired, and the perspiration rolled from him in great drops, in spite of the fact that he was constantly being half-buried in the snow.

At last Vladimir perceived that he was going in the wrong direction. He stopped, began to think, to recollect, and compare, and he felt convinced that he ought to have turned to the right. He turned to the right now. His horse could scarcely move forward. He had now been on the road for more than an hour. Jadrino could not be far off. But on and on he went, and still no end to the field—nothing but snow-drifts and ditches. The sledge was constantly being over-

turned, and as constantly being set right again. The time was passing: Vladimir began to grow seriously uneasy.

At last something dark appeared in the distance. Vladimir directed his course towards it. On drawing near, he perceived that it was a wood.

"Thank Heaven!" he thought, "I am not far off now."

He drove along by the edge of the wood, hoping by-and-by to fall upon the well-known road or to pass round the wood: Jadrino was situated just behind it. He soon found the road, and plunged into the darkness of the wood, now denuded of leaves by the winter. The wind could not rage here; the road was smooth; the horse recovered courage, and Vladimir felt reassured.

But he drove on and on, and Jadrino was not to be seen; there was no end to the wood. Vladimir discovered with horror that he had entered an unknown forest. Despair took possession of him. He whipped the horse; the poor animal broke into a trot, but it soon slackened its pace, and in about a quarter of an hour it was scarcely able to drag one leg after the other, in spite of all the exertions of the unfortunate Vladimir.

Gradually the trees began to get sparser, and Vladimir emerged from the forest; but Jadrino was not to be seen. It must now have been about midnight. Tears gushed from his eyes; he drove on at random. Meanwhile the storm had subsided, the clouds dispersed, and before him lay a level plain covered with a white undulating carpet. The night was tolerably clear. He saw, not far off, a little village, consisting of four or five houses. Vladimir drove towards it. At the first cottage he jumped out of the sledge, ran to the window and began to knock. After a few minutes, the wooden shutter was raised, and an old man thrust out his grey beard.

"What do you want?"

"Is Jadrino far from here?"

"Is Jadrino far from here?"

"Yes, yes! Is it far?"

"Not far; about ten versts."

At this reply, Vladimir grasped his hair and stood motionless, like a man condemned to death.

"Where do you come from?" continued the old man.

Vladimir had not the courage to answer the question.

"Listen, old man," said he: "can you procure me horses to take me to Jadrino?"

"How should we have such things as horses?" replied the peasant.

"Can I obtain a guide? I will pay him whatever he pleases."

"Wait," said the old man, closing the shutter; "I will send my son out to you; he will guide you."

Vladimir waited. But a minute had scarcely elapsed when he began knocking again. The shutter was raised, and the beard again appeared.

"What do you want?"

"What about your son?"

"He'll be out presently; he is putting on his boots. Are you cold? Come in and warm yourself."

"Thank you; send your son out quickly."

The door creaked: a lad came out with a cudgel and went on in front, at one time pointing out the road, at another searching for it among the drifted snow.

"What is the time?" Vladimir asked him.

"It will soon be daylight," replied the young peasant. Vladimir spoke not another word.

The cocks were crowing, and it was already light when they reached Jadrino. The church was closed. Vladimir paid the guide and drove into the priest's courtyard. His sledge was not there. What news awaited him! . . .

But let us return to the worthy proprietors of Nenaradova, and see what is happening there.

Nothing.

The old people awoke and went into the parlour, Gavril Gavrilovitch in a night-cap and flannel doublet, Praskovia Petrovna in a wadded dressing-gown. The tea-urn was brought in, and Gavril Gavrilovitch sent a servant to ask Maria Gavrilovna how she was and how she had passed the night. The servant returned, saying that the young lady had not slept very well, but that she felt better now, and that she would come down presently into the parlour. And indeed, the door opened and Maria Gavrilovna entered the room and wished her father and mother good morning.

"How is your head, Masha?" asked Gavril Gavrilovitch.

"Better, papa," replied Masha.

"Very likely you inhaled the fumes from the charcoal yesterday," said Praskovia Petrovna.

"Very likely, mamma," replied Masha.

The day passed happily enough, but in the night Masha was taken ill. A doctor was sent for from the town. He arrived in the evening and found the sick girl delirious. A violent fever ensued, and for two weeks the poor patient hovered on the brink of the grave.

Nobody in the house knew anything about her flight. The letters written by her the evening before, had been burnt; and her maid dreading the wrath of her master, had not whispered a word about it to anybody. The priest, the retired cornet, the moustached surveyor and the little Uhlan were discreet, and not without reason. Tereshka the coachman, never uttered one word too much about it, even when he was drunk. Thus the secret was kept by more than half-a-dozen conspirators.

But Maria Gavrilovna herself divulged her secret during her delirious ravings. But her words were so disconnected, that her mother, who never left her bedside, could only understand from them that her daughter was deeply in love with Vladimir Nikolaievitch, and that probably love was the cause of her illness. She consulted her husband and some of her neighbours, and at last it was unanimously decided that such was evidently Maria Gavrilovna's fate, that a woman cannot ride away from the man who is destined to be her husband, that poverty is not a crime, that one does not marry wealth, but a man, etc. etc. Moral proverbs are wonderfully useful in those cases where we can invent little in our own justification.

In the meantime the young lady began to recover. Vladimir had not been seen for a long time in the house of Gavril Gavrilovitch. He was afraid of the usual reception. It was resolved to send and announce to him an unexpected piece of good news: the consent of Maria's parents to his marriage with their daughter. But what was the astonishment of the proprietor of Nenaradova, when, in reply to their invitation, they received from him a half-insane letter. He informed them that he would never set foot in their house again, and begged them to forget an unhappy creature whose only hope was in death. A few days afterwards they heard that Vladimir had joined the army again. This was in the year 1812.

For a long time they did not dare to announce this to Masha, who

was now convalescent. She never mentioned the name of Vladimir. Some months afterwards, finding his name in the list of those who had distinguished themselves and been severely wounded at Borodino,[1] she fainted away, and it was feared that she would have another attack of fever. But, Heaven be thanked! the fainting fit had no serious consequences.

Another misfortune fell upon her: Gavril Gavrilovitch died, leaving her the heiress to all his property. But the inheritance did not console her; she shared sincerely the grief of poor Praskovia Petrovna, vowing that she would never leave her. They both quitted Nenaradova, the scene of so many sad recollections, and went to live on another estate.

Suitors crowded round the young and wealthy heiress, but she gave not the slightest hope to any of them. Her mother sometimes exhorted her to make a choice; but Maria Gavrilovna shook her head and became pensive. Vladimir no longer existed: he had died in Moscow on the eve of the entry of the French. His memory seemed to be held sacred by Masha; at least she treasured up everything that could remind her of him: books that he had once read, his drawings, his notes, and verses of poetry that he had copied out for her. The neighbours, hearing of all this, were astonished at her constancy, and awaited with curiosity the hero who should at last triumph over the melancholy fidelity of this virgin Artemisia.

Meanwhile the war had ended gloriously. Our regiments returned from abroad, and the people went out to meet them. The bands played the conquering songs: "Vive Henri-Quatre," Tyrolese waltzes and airs from "Joconde." Officers, who had set out for the war almost mere lads, returned grown men, with martial air, and their breasts decorated with crosses. The soldiers chatted gaily among themselves, constantly mingling French and German words in their speech. Time never to be forgotten! Time of glory and enthusiasm! How throbbed the Russian heart at the word "Fatherland"! How sweet were the tears of meeting! With what unanimity did we unite feelings of national pride with love for the Czar! And for him—what a moment!

The women, the Russian women, were then incomparable. Their

[1] A village about fifty miles from Moscow, and the scene of a sanguinary battle between the French and Russian forces during the invasion of Russia by Napoleon I.

usual coldness disappeared. Their enthusiasm was truly intoxicating, when welcoming the conquerors they cried "Hurrah!"

"And threw their caps high in the air!"[1]

What officer of that time does not confess that to the Russian women he was indebted for his best and most precious reward?

At this brilliant period Maria Gavrilovna was living with her mother in the province of ——, and did not see how both capitals celebrated the return of the troops. But in the districts and villages the general enthusiasm was, if possible, even still greater. The appearance of an officer in those places was for him a veritable triumph, and the lover in a plain coat felt very ill at ease in his vicinity.

We have already said that, in spite of her coldness, Maria Gavrilovna was, as before, surrounded by suitors. But all had to retire into the background when the wounded Colonel Bourmin of the Hussars, with the Order of St. George in his button-hole, and with an "interesting pallor," as the young ladies of the neighbourhood observed, appeared at the castle. He was about twenty-six years of age. He had obtained leave of absence to visit his estate, which was contiguous to that of Maria Gavrilovna. Maria bestowed special attention upon him. In his presence her habitual pensiveness disappeared. It cannot be said that she coquetted with him, but a poet, observing her behaviour, would have said:

"Se amor non è, che dunque?"

Bourmin was indeed a very charming young man. He possessed that spirit which is eminently pleasing to women: a spirit of decorum and observation, without any pretensions, and yet not without a slight tendency towards careless satire. His behaviour towards Maria Gavrilovna was simple and frank, but whatever she said or did, his soul and eyes followed her. He seemed to be of a quiet and modest disposition, though report said that he had once been a terrible rake; but this did not injure him in the opinion of Maria Gavrilovna, who—like all young ladies in general—excused with pleasure follies that gave indication of boldness and ardour of temperament.

But more than everything else—more than his tenderness, more than his agreeable conversation, more than his interesting pallor, more

[1] Griboiedoff.

than his arm in a sling,—the silence of the young Hussar excited her curiosity and imagination. She could not but confess that he pleased her very much; probably he, too, with his perception and experience, had already observed that she made a distinction between him and others; how was it then that she had not yet seen him at her feet or heard his declaration? What restrained him? Was it timidity, inseparable from true love, or pride, or the coquetry of a crafty wooer? It was an enigma to her. After long reflection, she came to the conclusion that timidity alone was the cause of it, and she resolved to encourage him by greater attention and, if circumstances should render it necessary, even by an exhibition of tenderness. She prepared a most unexpected dénouement, and waited with impatience for the moment of the romantic explanation. A secret, of whatever nature it may be, always presses heavily upon the female heart. Her stratagem had the desired success; at least Bourmin fell into such a reverie, and his black eyes rested with such fire upon her, that the decisive moment seemed close at hand. The neighbours spoke about the marriage as if it were a matter already decided upon, and good Praskovia Petrovna rejoiced that her daughter had at last found a lover worthy of her.

On one occasion the old lady was sitting alone in the parlour, amusing herself with a pack of cards, when Bourmin entered the room and immediately inquired for Maria Gavrilovna.

"She is in the garden," replied the old lady: "go out to her, and I will wait here for you."

Bourmin went, and the old lady made the sign of the cross and thought: "Perhaps the business will be settled today!"

Bourmin found Maria Gavrilovna near the pond, under a willow-tree, with a book in her hands, and in a white dress: a veritable heroine of romance. After the first few questions and observations, Maria Gavrilovna purposely allowed the conversation to drop, thereby increasing their mutual embarrassment, from which there was no possible way of escape except only by a sudden and decisive declaration.

And this is what happened: Bourmin, feeling the difficulty of his position, declared that he had long sought for an opportunity to open his heart to her, and requested a moment's attention. Maria Gavrilovna closed her book and cast down her eyes, as a sign of compliance with his request.

"I love you," said Bourmin: "I love you passionately. . . ."

Maria Gavrilovna blushed and lowered her head still more. "I have acted imprudently in accustoming myself to the sweet pleasure of seeing and hearing you daily. . . ." Maria Gavrilovna recalled to mind the first letter of St. Preux.[1] "But it is now too late to resist my fate; the remembrance of you, your dear incomparable image, will henceforth be the torment and the consolation of my life, but there still remains a grave duty for me to perform—to reveal to you a terrible secret which will place between us an insurmountable barrier. . . ."

"That barrier has always existed," interrupted Maria Gavrilovna hastily: "I could never be your wife."

"I know," replied he calmly: "I know that you once loved, but death and three years of mourning. . . . Dear, kind Maria Gavrilovna, do not try to deprive me of my last consolation: the thought that you would have consented to make me happy, if—"

"Don't speak, for Heaven's sake, don't speak. You torture me."

"Yes, I know, I feel that you would have been mine, but—I am the most miserable creature under the sun—I am already married!"

Maria Gavrilovna looked at him in astonishment.

"I am already married," continued Bourmin: "I have been married four years, and I do not know who is my wife, or where she is, or whether I shall ever see her again!"

"What do you say?" exclaimed Maria Gavrilovna. "How very strange! Continue: I will relate to you afterwards. . . . But continue, I beg of you."

"At the beginning of the year 1812," said Bourmin, "I was hastening to Vilna, where my regiment was stationed. Arriving late one evening at one of the post-stations, I ordered the horses to be got ready as quickly as possible, when suddenly a terrible snowstorm came on, and the postmaster and drivers advised me to wait till it had passed over. I followed their advice, but an unaccountable uneasiness took possession of me: it seemed as if someone were pushing me forward. Meanwhile the snowstorm did not subside; I could endure it no longer, and again ordering out the horses, I started off in the midst of the storm. The driver conceived the idea of following the course of the river, which would shorten our journey by three versts. The banks were covered with snow: the driver drove past the place where we should

[1] In "La Nouvelle Héloïse," by Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

have come out upon the road, and so we found ourselves in an unknown part of the country. . . . The storm did not cease; I saw a light in the distance, and I ordered the driver to proceed towards it. We reached a village; in the wooden church there was a light. The church was open. Outside the railings stood several sledges, and people were passing in and out through the porch.

"'This way! this way!' cried several voices.

"I ordered the driver to proceed.

"'In the name of Heaven, where have you been loitering?' said somebody to me. 'The bride has fainted away; the pope does not know what to do, and we were just getting ready to go back. Get out as quickly as you can.'

"I got out of the sledge without saying a word, and went into the church, which was feebly lit up by two or three tapers. A young girl was sitting on a bench in a dark corner of the church; another girl was rubbing her temples.

"'Thank God!' said the latter, 'you have come at last. You have almost killed the young lady.'

"The old priest advanced towards me, and said:

"'Do you wish me to begin?'

"'Begin, begin, father,' replied I, absently.

"The young girl was raised up. She seemed to me not at all bad-looking. . . . Impelled by an incomprehensible, unpardonable levity, I placed myself by her side in front of the pulpit; the priest hurried on; three men and a chamber-maid supported the bride and only occupied themselves with her. We were married.

"'Kiss each other!' said the witnesses to us.

"My wife turned her pale face towards me. I was about to kiss her, when she exclaimed: 'Oh! it is not he! it is not he!' and fell senseless.

"The witnesses gazed at me in alarm. I turned round and left the church without the least hindrance, flung myself into the *kibitka* and cried: 'Drive off!'"

"My God!" exclaimed Maria Gavrilovna. "And you do not know what became of your poor wife?"

"I do not know," replied Bourmin; "neither do I know the name of the village where I was married, nor the post-station where I set out from. At that time I attached so little importance to my wicked

prank, that on leaving the church, I fell asleep, and did not awake till the next morning after reaching the third station. The servant, who was then with me, died during the campaign, so that I have no hope of ever discovering the woman upon whom I played such a cruel joke, and who is now so cruelly avenged."

"My God! my God!" cried Maria Gavrilovna, seizing him by the hand: "then it was you! And you do not recognize me?"

Bourmin turned pale—and threw himself at her feet.

Djoumane

BY PROSPER MÉRIMÉE

(*1803-1870*)

On the 21st of May, 18—, we returned to Tlemcen. The expedition had been a fortunate one: we brought back oxen, sheep, goats, prisoners and hostages.

After a thirty-seven days' campaign, or rather of incessant hunt, our horses were thin and lean-ribbed but their eyes were still lively and full of fire; not one was saddle-galled. We men were bronzed by the sun, our hair was long, our cross-belts were dirty, and our waistcoats were worn to threads; we all presented that appearance of indifference to danger and hardship which characterizes the true soldier.

What general would not have chosen our light cavalry for a battle-charge rather than the smartest of squadrons all decked out in new clothes?

Since morning I had thought of all the little pleasures that awaited me.

Now I should sleep in my iron bedstead, after having slept for thirty-seven nights on a square of oilcloth. I should sit on a chair to take my dinner, and should have as much soft bread and salt as I liked. Next I wondered to myself whether Mademoiselle Coucha would wear a pomegranate flower or jessamine in her hair, and if she had kept the vows made when I left; but, faithful or inconstant, I knew she could reckon on the great depth of tenderness that a man brings home from the wilds. There was not anyone in our squadron who had not made plans for the evening.

The colonel received us in a most fatherly manner, and even told us he was satisfied with us; then he took our commanding officer aside and for five minutes, and in low tones, communicated to him some not very agreeable intelligence, so far as we could judge from their expressions.

We noticed the movements of the colonel's moustaches, which rose up to his eyebrows, whilst those of the commandant fell, piteously out of curl, almost to his breast. A young trooper, whom I pretended not to hear, maintained that the commandant's nose stretched as far as one could see; but very soon ours lengthened too, for the commandant came to tell us to "Go and feed your horses, and be ready to set off at sunset! The officers will dine with the colonel at five o'clock, in the open; the horses must be mounted after the coffee. . . . Is it possible that you are not pleased at this, gentlemen? . . ."

It did not suit us, and we saluted in silence, inwardly sending him to all the devils we could think of, and the colonel into the bargain.

We had very little time in which to make our small preparations. I hurried to change my dress, and, when I had done this, I was wise enough not to sit in my easy-chair, for fear I should fall asleep.

At five o'clock I went to the colonel's. He lived in a large Moorish house. I found the open court filled with French and natives, all crowding round a band of pilgrims or mountebanks who had come from the South.

An old man conducted the performance; he was as ugly as a monkey and half naked, under his burnous, which was full of holes. His skin was the colour of chocolate made of water; he was tattooed all over with scars; his hair was frizzy and so matted that from a distance one might have thought he had a bearskin cap on his head; and his beard was white and bristly.

He was reputed to be a great saint and a great wizard.

In front of him an orchestra, composed of two flutes and three tambourines, made an infernal din, worthy of the performance about to be played. He said that he had received complete sway over demons and wild beasts from a famous Mahomedan priest, and, after some compliments addressed to the colonel and the élite audience, he went off into a sort of prayer or incantation, accompanied by his orchestra, whilst the actors danced to his command, turned on one foot, and struck their breasts heavy blows with their fists.

Meanwhile the tambourines and flutes increased their din and played faster and faster.

When exhaustion and giddiness had made these people lose what few brains they had, the chief sorcerer drew several scorpions and serpents from some baskets round him, and, after showing that they were

full of life, he threw them to his jesters, who fell upon them like dogs on a bone, and tore them to pieces with their teeth, if you please!

We looked down on this extraordinary spectacle from a high gallery; no doubt the colonel treated us to it to give us a good appetite for dinner. As for myself, I turned my eyes away from these beasts, who disgusted me, and amused myself by staring at a pretty girl of thirteen or fourteen years of age, who had threaded through the crowd to get nearer to the performance.

She had the most beautiful eyes imaginable, and her hair fell on her shoulders in fine tresses; these ended in small pieces of silver, which made a tinkling sound as she moved her head gracefully about. She was dressed with more taste than most of the girls in that country; she had a kerchief of silk and gold on her head, a bodice of embroidered velvet, and short pantaloons of blue satin, showing her bare legs encircled with silver anklets. There was not a vestige of a veil over her face. Was she a Jewess or a heathen? or did she perhaps belong to those wandering tribes of unknown origin who never trouble themselves with religious prejudice?

Whilst I followed her every movement with so much interest, she had arrived at the first row of the circle where the fanatics carried on their exercises.

While she was trying to get still nearer she knocked over a narrow-bottomed basket that had not been opened. Almost at the same time the sorcerer and the child both uttered a terrible cry, and there was a great commotion in the ring, everyone recoiling with horror.

A very big snake had escaped from the basket and the little girl had trodden on it. In an instant the reptile had curled itself round her leg and I saw several drops of blood ooze from under the ring that she wore round her ankle. She fell down backwards, crying, and grinding her teeth, while her lips were covered with a white foam, and she rolled in the dust.

"Run! run, doctor!" I cried out to our surgeon-major; "for the love of heaven save the poor child."

"Greenhorn!" the major replied, shrugging his shoulders. "Do you not see that it is part of the programme? Moreover, my trade is to cut off your arms and legs. It is the business of my *confrère* down below there to cure girls who are bitten by snakes."

In the meantime the old wizard had run up, and his first care was to possess himself of the snake.

"Djoumane! Djoumane!" he said to it in a tone of friendly reproach. The serpent uncoiled itself, quitted its prey, and began to crawl away. The sorcerer nimbly seized it by the end of its tail, and, holding it at arm's length, he went round the circle exhibiting the reptile, which bit and hissed without being able to stand erect.

You know that a snake held by his tail does not know in the least what to do with himself. He can only raise himself a quarter of his length, and cannot therefore bite the hand of the person who seizes him.

The next minute the serpent was put back in his basket and the lid firmly tied down. The magician then turned his attention to the little girl, who shrieked and kicked all the time. He put a pinch of white powder, which he drew from his girdle, on the wound, and whispered an incantation in the child's ear, with unexpected results. The convulsions ceased; the little girl wiped her mouth, picked up her silk handkerchief, shook the dust off it, put it on her head again, rose up, and soon after went away.

Shortly after she came up to our gallery to collect money, and we fastened on her forehead and shoulders many fifty-centime coins.

This ended the performance, and we sat down to dinner.

I was very hungry, and was preparing to do justice to a splendid Tartary eel, when our doctor, by whom I sat, said that he recognized the snake of the preceding moment. That made it quite impossible for me to touch a mouthful.

After first making great fun of my fastidiousness the doctor annexed my share of the eel, and declared that snake tasted delicious.

"Those brutes you saw just now," he said to me, "are connoisseurs. They live in caverns with their serpents as the Troglodytes do; their girls are pretty—witness the little girl in blue knickerbockers. No one knows what their religion is, but they are a cunning lot, and I should like to make the acquaintance of their sheik."

We learnt during dinner why we were to recommence the campaign. Sidi-Lala, hotly pursued by Colonel R——, was trying to reach the mountains of Morocco.

There was choice of two routes: one to the south of Tlemcen, fording the Moulaïa, at the only place not rendered inaccessible by rocks; the

other by the plain, to the north of our cantonment, where we should find our colonel and the bulk of the regiment.

Our squadron was ordered to stop him at the river crossing if he attempted it, but this was scarcely likely.

You know that the Moulaïa flows between two walls of rock, and there is but a single point like a kind of very narrow breach, where horses can ford it. I knew the place well, and I did not understand why a blockhouse had not been raised there before. At all events, the colonel had every chance of encountering the enemy, and we of making a useless journey.

Before the conclusion of dinner several orderlies from Maghzen had brought despatches from Colonel R——. The enemy had made a stand, and seemed to want to fight. They had lost time. Colonel R——'s infantry had come up and routed them.

But where had they escaped to? We knew nothing at all, and must decide which of the two routes to take. I had not mentioned the last resource that could be taken, viz., to drive them into the desert, where his herds and camp would very soon die of hunger and thirst. Signals were agreed upon to warn us of the enemy's movements.

Three cannon-shots from Tlemcen would tell us that Sidi-Lala was visible in the plain, and we should carry rockets with us in case we had to let them know that we needed reinforcements. In all probability the enemy could not show himself before daybreak, and our two columns had several hours' start. Night had fallen by the time we got to horse. I commanded the advance guard platoon. I felt tired and cold; I put on my cloak, turned up the collar, thrust my feet far into my stirrups, and rode quietly to my mare's long-striding walk, listening absently to Quartermaster Wagner's stories about his love affairs, which unluckily ended by the flight of an infidel, who had run off with not only his heart, but a silver watch and a pair of new boots. I had heard this history before, and it appeared even longer than usual.

The moon rose as we started on our way. The sky was clear, but a light, white mist had come up since sundown, and skimmed the ground, which looked as though it were covered with down. On this white background the moon threw long shadows, and everything took on a fantastic air. Very soon I thought I saw Arab mounted sentries. As I came nearer I found they were tamarisks in flower. Presently

I stopped short, for I thought I heard the cannon-shot signal. Wagner told me it was the sound of a horse galloping.

We reached the fort and the commandant made his preparations.

The place was very easy to defend, and our squadron would have been sufficient to hold back a considerable force. Complete solitude reigned on the other side of the river.

After a pretty long wait, we heard the gallop of a horse, and soon an Arab came in sight mounted on a magnificent animal and riding towards us. By his straw hat crowned with ostrich plumes, and by his embroidered saddle from which hung a *gebira* ornamented with coral and chased with gold flowers, we recognized that he was a chief; our guide told us it was Sidi-Lala himself. He was a fine-looking and well-built young man, who managed his horse admirably. He put it at a gallop, threw his long gun up in the air and caught it again, shouting at us unintelligible terms of defiance.

The days of chivalry are over, and Wagner called for a gun to *take the marabout down a peg*, as he called it; but I objected, yet, so that it should not be said that the French refused to fight at close quarters with an Arab, I asked the commandant for leave to go through the ford and cross swords with Sidi-Lala. Permission was granted me, and I was soon over the river where the enemy's chief was trotting a little way off, and taking stock of things.

Directly he saw I was across he ran upon me and aimed with his gun.

"Take care!" cried Wagner.

I am rarely afraid of a horseman's shot, and, after the tricks he had just played with it, I thought that Sidi-Lala's gun could not be in a condition to fire. And in fact he pulled the trigger when he was only three paces from me, but the gun missed fire, as I had expected. Soon he turned his horse round so rapidly that instead of planting my sabre in his breast I only caught his floating burnous.

But I pressed him close, keeping him always on my right and beating him back, whether he was willing or not, towards the steep declivities which edged the river. He tried in vain to turn aside, but I pressed him closer and closer. After several moments of frantic effort, suddenly I saw his horse rear and the rider drew rein with both hands. Without stopping to ask myself why he made such a strange movement I was on him like a shot, and I pierced him with my blade, right

n the centre of his back, my horse's hoof striking his left thigh at the ame time. Man and horse disappeared, and my mare and I fell after hem.

Without perceiving it we had reached the edge of a precipice and ere hurled over it. . . . While I was yet in the air—so rapid is hought!—I remembered that the body of the Arab would break my all. I could distinctly see under me a white burnous with a large red atch on it, and I should fall on it, head or tail.

It was not such a terrible leap as I feared, thanks to the water being igh; I went in over head and ears and sputtered for an instant quite tunned, and I do not know quite how I found myself standing in the iddle of the tall reeds at the river's edge.

I knew nothing of what had become of Sidi-Lala and the horses. was dripping and shivering in the mud, between two walls of rock. took a few steps forward, hoping to find a place where the declivity as less steep; but the farther I advanced the more abrupt and in- ccessible it looked.

Suddenly I heard above my head the sound of horses' hoofs and the angling of sabres against stirrups and spurs; it was evidently our quadron. I wanted to cry out, but not a sound would come out of ny throat; I must in my fall have broken in my ribs.

Imagine the situation I was in. I heard the voices of our men and ecognized them, and I could not call them to my aid.

"If he had let me do that," old Wagner was saying, "he would have ived to be made colonel."

The sound soon lessened and died away, and I heard it no more.

Above my head hung a great branch, and I hoped by seizing this to oist myself up above the banks of the river. With a desperate effort sprang up, and . . . crack! . . . the branch twisted and escaped rom my hands with a frightful hissing. . . . It was an enormous nake. . . .

I fell back into the water; the serpent glided between my legs and hot into the river, where it seemed to leave a trail of fire. . . .

A moment later I had regained my sang-froid, and the firelight had ot disappeared: it still trembled on the water. I saw it was the eflection from a torch. A score of steps from me a woman was filling pitcher at the river with one hand, and in the other she held a lighted iece of resined wood. She had no idea I was there; she placed the

pitcher coolly upon her head and, torch in hand, disappeared among the rushes. I followed her and found I was at the entrance to a cave.

The woman advanced very quietly and mounted a very steep incline; it was a sort of staircase cut out of the face of an immense hall. By the torchlight I saw the threshold of this great hall, which did not quite reach the level of the river; but I could not judge of its full extent. Without quite knowing what I did, I entered the slope after the young woman who carried the torch, and followed her at a distance. Now and again her light disappeared behind some cavity of the rocks, but I soon found her again.

I thought I could make out, too, the gloomy openings of great galleries leading into the principal room. It looked like a subterranean town with streets and squares. I stopped short, deeming it dangerous to venture alone into that vast labyrinth.

Suddenly one of the galleries below me was lit up brilliantly, and I saw a great number of torches, which appeared to come out of the sides of the rocks as though they formed a great procession. At the same time a monotonous chanting rose up, which recalled the singing of the Arabs as they recited their prayers. Soon I could distinguish a vast multitude advancing slowly. At their head stepped a black man, almost naked, his head covered with an enormous mass of stubbly hair. His white beard fell on his breast, and contrasted with the brown colour of his chest, which was gashed with bluish-tinted tattooing. I quickly recognized the sorcerer of the previous evening, and, soon after, saw the little girl near him who had played the part of Eurydice, with her fine eyes, and her silk pantaloons, and the embroidered handkerchief on her head.

Women and children and men of all ages followed them, all holding torches, all dressed in strange costumes of vivid colours, with trailing skirts and high caps, some made of metal, which reflected the light from the torches on all sides.

The old sorcerer stopped exactly below me, and the whole procession with him. The silence was profound. I was twenty feet above him, protected by great stones, from behind which I hoped to see everything without being perceived. At the feet of the old man I noticed a large slab of stone, almost round, with an iron ring in the centre.

He pronounced some words in a tongue unknown to me, which I

felt sure was neither Arabic nor Kabylic. A rope and pulleys, hung from somewhere, fell at his feet; several of the assistants attached it to the ring, and at a given signal twenty stalwart arms all pulled at the stone simultaneously. It seemed of great weight, but they raised it and put it to one side.

I then saw what looked like the opening down a well, the water of which was at least a yard from the top. Water, did I say? I do not know what the frightful liquid was; it was covered over with an iridescent film, disturbed and broken in places, and showing a hideous black mud beneath.

The sorcerer stood in the midst of the gathered crowd, near the kerbstone which surrounded the well, his left hand on the little girl's head; with his right he made strange gestures, whilst uttering a kind of incantation.

From time to time he raised his voice as though he were calling someone. "Djoumane! Djoumane!" he cried; but no one came. None the less he went on making raucous cries, which did not seem to come from a human throat, and rolled his eyes and ground his teeth. The mummeries of this old rascal incensed and filled me with indignation; I felt tempted to hurl a stone at his head that I had ready to hand. When he had yelled the name of Djoumane for the thirtieth time or more, I saw the iridescent film over the well shake, and at this sign the whole crowd flung itself back; the old man and the little girl alone remained by the side of the hole.

Suddenly there was a great bubbling of the bluish mud from the well, and out of this mud came the head of an enormous snake, of livid grey colour, with phosphorescent eyes. . . .

Involuntarily I leapt backwards. I heard a little cry and the sound of some heavy body falling into the water. . . .

When perhaps a tenth of a second later I again looked below, I saw the sorcerer stood alone by the well-side; the water was still bubbling, and in the middle of what remained of the iridescent scum there floated the kerchief which had covered the little girl's hair. . . .

Already the stone was being moved, and it glided into its place over the aperture of the horrible gulf. Then all the torches were simultaneously extinguished, and I remained in darkness in the midst of such a profound silence that I could distinctly hear my own heart beat. . . .

When I had recovered a little from this ghastly scene I wanted to

quit the cavern, vowing that if I succeeded in rejoining my comrades, I would return to exterminate the abominable denizens of those quarters, men and serpents.

But the pressing question was how to find my way out. I had come, I believed, a hundred feet into the cave, keeping the rock wall on my right.

I turned half round, but saw no light which might indicate the entrance to the cavern; furthermore, it did not extend in a straight line, and, besides, I had climbed up all the time from the river's edge. I groped along the rock with my left hand, and sounded the ground with the sword which I held in my right, advancing slowly and cautiously. For a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes . . . possibly for half an hour, I walked without being able to find the way I came in.

I was seized with apprehension. Had I entered unconsciously some side gallery instead of returning the way I had at first taken? . . .

I went on all the time groping along the rock, when in place of the cold stone I felt a curtain, which yielded to my touch and let out a ray of light. Redoubling my precaution, I drew the curtain noiselessly aside and found myself in a little passage which led to a well-lighted room. The door was open, and I saw that the room was hung with silk tapestry, embroidered with flowers and gold. I noticed a Turkey carpet and the end of a velvet-covered divan. On the carpet was a narghile of silver and several perfume-burners. In short, it was an apartment sumptuously furnished in Arabian taste.

I approached with stealthy tread till I reached the door; a young woman squatted on the divan, and near her was a little low table of inlaid wood, which held a large silver-gilt tray full of cups and flagons and bouquets of flowers.

On entering this subterranean boudoir I felt quite intoxicated by the most exquisite perfume.

Everything in this retreat breathed voluptuousness; on every side I saw the glitter of gold and sumptuous materials, and varied colourings and rare flowers. The young woman did not notice me at first; she held her head down and fingered the yellow amber beads of a long necklace, absorbed in meditation. She was divinely beautiful. Her features were like those of the unfortunate child I had seen below, but more finely formed, more regular and more voluptuous. She was as black as a raven's wing, and her hair was

"Long as are the robes of a king."

It fell over her shoulders to the divan and almost to the carpet under her feet. A gown of transparent silk in broad stripes showed her splendid arms and neck. A bodice of velvet braided with gold enclosed her figure, and her short blue satin knickerbockers revealed a marvellously tiny foot, from which hung a gold-worked Turkish slipper which she danced up and down gracefully and whimsically.

My boots creaked, and she raised her head and saw me.

Without being disturbed or showing the least surprise at seeing a stranger with a sword in his hand in her room, she clapped her hands gleefully and beckoned me to come nearer. I saluted her by placing my hand first on my heart and then on my head to show her I was acquainted with Mahomedan etiquette. She smiled, and with both hands she put aside her hair which covered the divan—this was to tell me to take a seat by her side. I thought all the spices of Araby pervaded those beautiful locks.

I modestly seated myself at the extreme end of the divan, inwardly vowing I would very soon go much nearer to her. She took a cup from the tray, and holding it by the filigree saucer, she poured out some frothed coffee, and after touching it lightly with her lips she offered it to me.

"Ah, Roumi! Roumi! . . ." she said. "Shall we not kill the vermin, lieutenant? . . ."

At these words I opened my eyes as wide as a carriage entrance. This young lady had enormous moustaches, and was the living image of Quartermaster Wagner. . . . And it was indeed Wagner who stood over me with a cup of coffee, whilst, pillowed on my horse's neck, I stared at him wildly.

"It appears we have *pioncé*, all the same, lieutenant. We are at the ford, and the coffee is boiling."

Captain Sharkey

BY A. CONAN DOYLE

(*1859-1930*)

I

How the Governor of Saint Kitt's Came Home

When the great wars of the Spanish Succession had been brought to an end by the Treaty of Utrecht, the vast number of privateers which had been fitted out by the contending parties found their occupation gone. Some took to the more peaceful but less lucrative ways of ordinary commerce, others were absorbed into the fishing-fleets, and a few of the more reckless hoisted the Jolly Rodger at the mizzen and the bloody flag at the main, declaring a private war upon their own account against the whole human race.

With mixed crews, recruited from every nation, they scoured the seas, disappearing occasionally to careen in some lonely inlet, or putting in for a debauch at some outlying port, where they dazzled the inhabitants by their lavishness and horrified them by their brutalities.

On the Coromandel Coast, at Madagascar, in the African waters, and above all in the West Indian and American seas, the pirates were a constant menace. With an insolent luxury they would regulate their depredations by the comfort of the seasons, harrying New England in the summer and dropping south again to the tropical islands in the winter.

They were the more to be dreaded because they had none of that discipline and restraint which made their predecessors, the Buccaneers, both formidable and respectable. These Ishmaels of the sea rendered an account to no man, and treated their prisoners according to the drunken whim of the moment. Flashes of grotesque generosity alternated with longer stretches of inconceivable ferocity, and the skipper who fell into their hands might find himself dismissed with his cargo,

after serving as boon companion in some hideous debauch, or might sit at his cabin table with his own nose and his lips served up with pepper and salt in front of him. It took a stout seaman in those days to ply his calling in the Caribbean Gulf.

Such a man was Captain John Scarrow, of the ship *Morning Star*, and yet he breathed a long sigh of relief when he heard the splash of the falling anchor and swung at his moorings within a hundred yards of the guns of the citadel of Basseterre. St. Kitt's was his final port of call, and early next morning his bowsprit would be pointed for Old England. He had had enough of those robber-haunted seas. Ever since he had left Maracaibo upon the Main, with his full lading of sugar and red pepper, he had winced at every topsail which glimmered over the violet edge of the tropical sea. He had coasted up the Windward Islands, touching here and there, and assailed continually by stories of villainy and outrage.

Captain Sharkey, of the 20-gun pirate barque, *Happy Delivery*, had passed down the coast, and had littered it with gutted vessels and with murdered men. Dreadful anecdotes were current of his grim pleasantries and of his inflexible ferocity. From the Bahamas to the Main his coal black barque, with the ambiguous name, had been freighted with death and many things which are worse than death. So nervous was Captain Scarrow, with his new full-rigged ship and her full and valuable lading that he struck out to the west as far as Bird's Island to be out of the usual track of commerce. And yet even in those solitary waters he had been unable to shake off sinister traces of Captain Sharkey.

One morning they had raised a single skiff adrift upon the face of the ocean. Its only occupant was a delirious seaman, who yelled hoarsely as they hoisted him aboard, and showed a dried-up tongue like a black and wrinkled fungus at the back of his mouth. Water and nursing soon transformed him into the strongest and smartest sailor on the ship. He was from Marblehead, in New England, it seemed, and was the sole survivor of a schooner which had been scuttled by the dreadful Sharkey.

For a week Hiram Evanson, for that was his name, had been adrift beneath a tropical sun. Sharkey had ordered the mangled remains of his late captain to be thrown into the boat, "as provisions for the voyage," but the seaman had at once committed it to the deep, lest the

temptation should be more than he could bear. He had lived upon his own huge frame, until, at the last moment, the *Morning Star* had found him in that madness which is the precursor of such a death. It was no bad find for Captain Scarrow, for, with a short-handed crew such a seaman as this big New Englander was a prize worth having. He vowed that he was the only man whom Captain Sharkey had ever placed under an obligation.

Now that they lay under the guns of Basseterre, all danger from the pirate was at an end, and yet the thought of him lay heavily upon the seaman's mind as he watched the agent's boat shooting out from the custom-house quay.

"I'll lay you a wager, Morgan," said he to the first mate, "that the agent will speak of Sharkey in the first hundred words that pass his lips."

"Well, captain, I'll have you a silver dollar, and chance it," said the rough old Bristol man beside him.

The negro rowers shot the boat alongside, and the linen-clad steersman sprang up the ladder.

"Welcome, Captain Scarrow!" he cried. "Have you heard about Sharkey?"

The captain grinned at the mate.

"What devilry has he been up to now?" he asked.

"Devilry! You've not heard, then! Why, we've got him safe under lock and kept at Basseterre. He was tried last Wednesday, and he is to be hanged tomorrow morning."

Captain and mate gave a shout of joy, which an instant later was taken up by the crew. Discipline was forgotten as they scrambled up through the break of the poop to hear the news. The New Englander was in the front of them with a radiant face turned up to heaven, for he came of the Puritan stock.

"Sharkey to be hanged!" he cried. "You don't know, Master Agent, if they lack a hangman, do you?"

"Stand back!" cried the mate, whose outraged sense of discipline was even stronger than his interest at the news. "I'll pay that dollar, Captain Scarrow, with the lightest heart that ever I paid a wager yet. How came the villain to be taken?"

"Why, as to that, he became more than his own comrades could abide, and they took such a horror of him that they would not have

im on the ship. So they marooned him upon the Little Mangles to
ie south of the Mysteriosa Bank, and there he was found by a Porto-
ello trader, who brought him in. There was talk of sending him to
maica to be tried, but our good little governor, Sir Charles Ewan,
ould not hear of it. 'He's my meat,' said he, 'and I claim the cook-
g of it.' If you can stay till tomorrow morning at ten, you'll see
ie joint swinging."

"I wish I could," said the captain, wistfully, "but I am sadly behind
me now. I should start with the evening tide."

"That you can't do," said the agent, with decision. "The governor
going back with you."

"The Governor!"

"Yes. He's had a dispatch from Government to return without de-
y. The fly-boat that brought it has gone on to Virginia. So Sir
harles has been waiting for you, as I told him you were due before
ie rains."

"Well, well!" cried the captain in some perplexity, "I'm a plain sea-
an, and I don't know much of governors and baronets and their ways.
don't remember that I ever so much as spoke to one. But if it's in
ing George's service, and he asks a cast in the *Morning Star* as far
London, I'll do what I can for him. There's my own cabin he can
ave and welcome. As to the cooking, it's lobscouse and salmagundy
x days in the week; but he can bring his own cook aboard with him
he thinks our galley too rough for his taste."

"You need not trouble your mind, Captain Scarrow," said the agent.
Sir Charles is in weak health just now, only clear of a quartan ague,
id it is likely he will keep his cabin most of the voyage. Dr. Larousse
id that he would have sunk had the hanging of Sharkey not put
esh life into him. He has a great spirit in him, though, and you
ust not blame him if he is somewhat short in his speech."

"He may say what he likes and do what he likes so long as he does
ot come athwart my hawse when I am working the ship," said the
ptain. "He is Governor of St. Kitt's, but I am Governor of the
orning Star. And, by his leave, I must weigh with the first tide, for
owe a duty to my employer, just as he does to King George."

"He can scarce be ready tonight, for he has many things to set in
der before he leaves."

"The early morning tide, then."

"Very good. I shall send his things aboard tonight, and he wi follow them tomorrow early if I can prevail upon him to leave S Kitt's without seeing Sharkey do the rogue's hornpipe. His own order were instant, so it may be that he will come at once. It is likely tha Dr. Larousse may attend him upon the journey."

Left to themselves, the captain and mate made the best preparation which they could for their illustrious passenger. The largest cabi was turned out and adorned in his honor, and orders were given b which barrels of fruit and some cases of wine should be brought o to vary the plain food of an ocean-going trader. In the evening th Governor's baggage began to arrive—great iron-bound ant-proo trunks, and official tin packing-cases, with other strange-shaped pack ages, which suggested the cocked hat or the sword within. And the there came a note, with a heraldic device upon the big red seal, to sa that Sir Charles Ewan made his compliments to Captain Scarrow, an that he hoped to be with him in the morning as early as his duties an his infirmities would permit.

He was as good as his word, for the first gray of dawn had hardl begun to deepen into pink when he was brought alongside, and climbe with some difficulty up the ladder. The captain had heard that th Governor was an eccentric, but he was hardly prepared for the curiou figure who came limping feebly down his quarter-deck, his steps sup ported by a thick bamboo cane. He wore a Ramillies wig, all twiste into little tails like a poodle's coat, and cut so low across the brow tha the large green glasses which covered his eyes looked as if they wer hung from it. A fierce beak of a nose, very long and very thin, cut th air in front of him. His ague had caused him to swathe his throat an chin with a broad linen cravat, and he wore a loose damask powdering gown secured by a cord round the waist. As he advanced he carrie his masterful nose high in the air, but his head turned slowly fro side to side in the helpless manner of the purblind, and he called i a high, querulous voice for the captain.

"You have my things?" he asked.

"Yes, Sir Charles."

"Have you wine aboard?"

"I have ordered five cases, sir."

"And tobacco?"

"There is a keg of Trinidad."

"You play a hand at picquet?"

"Passably well, sir."

"Then up anchor, and to sea!"

There was a fresh westerly wind, so by the time the sun was fairly hrough the morning haze, the ship was hull down from the islands. 'he decrepit Governor still limped the deck, with one guiding hand pon the quarter-rail.

"You are on Government service now, captain," said he. "They re counting the days till I come to Westminster, I promise you. Have ou all that she will carry?"

"Every inch, Sir Charles."

"Keep her so if you blow the sails out of her. I fear, Captain Scar- ow, that you will find a blind and broken man a poor companion for our voyage."

"I am honored in enjoying your Excellency's society," said the cap- ain. "But I am sorry that your eyes should be so afflicted."

"Yes, indeed. It is the cursed glare of the sun on the white streets f Basseterre which has gone far to burn them out."

"I had heard also that you had been plagued by a quartan ague."

"Yes; I have had a pyrexy, which has reduced me much."

"We had set aside a cabin for your surgeon."

"Ah, the rascal! There was no budging him, for he has a snug busi- ess amongst the merchants. But hark!"

He raised his ring-covered hand in the air. From far astern there ame the low deep thunder of cannon.

"It is from the island!" cried the captain in astonishment. "Can be a signal for us to put back?"

The Governor laughed.

"You have heard that Sharkey, the pirate, is to be hanged this morn- g. I ordered the batteries to salute when the rascal was kicking his st, so that I might know of it out at sea. There's an end of Sharkey!"

"There's an end of Sharkey!" cried the captain; and the crew took o the cry as they gathered in little knots upon the deck and stared ack at the low, purple line of the vanishing land.

It was a cheering omen for their start across the Western Ocean, nd the invalid Governor found himself a popular man on board, for was generally understood that but for his insistence upon an imme- ate trial and sentence, the villain might have played upon some more

venal judge and so escaped. At dinner that day Sir Charles gave many anecdotes of the deceased pirate; and so affable was he, and so skilful in adapting his conversation to men of lower degree, that captain, mate and Governor smoked their long pipes and drank their claret as three good comrades should.

"And what figure did Sharkey cut in the dock?" asked the captain.

"He is a man of some presence," said the Governor.

"I had always understood that he was an ugly, sneering devil," remarked the mate.

"Well, I dare say he could look ugly upon occasions," said the Governor.

"I have heard a New Bedford whaleman say that he could not forget his eyes," said Captain Scarrow. "They were of the lightest filmy blue, with red-rimmed lids. Was that not so, Sir Charles?"

"Alas, my own eyes will not permit me to know much of those of others! But I remember now that the Adjutant-General said that he had such an eye as you describe, and added that the jury were so foolish as to be visibly discomposed when it was turned upon them. It is well for them that he is dead, for he was a man who would never forget an injury, and if he had laid hands upon any one of them he would have stuffed him with straw and hung him for a figure-head."

The idea seemed to amuse the Governor, for he broke suddenly into a high, neighing laugh, and the two seamen laughed also, but not so heartily, for they remembered that Sharkey was not the last pirate who sailed the western seas, and that as grotesque a fate might come to be their own. Another bottle was broached to drink to a pleasant voyage, and the Governor would drink just one other on the top of it, so that the seamen were glad at last to stagger off—the one to his watch and the other to his bunk. But when after his four hours' spell the mate came down again, he was amazed to see the Governor in his Ramillies wig, his glasses, and his powdering-gown still seated sedately at the lonely table with his reeking pipe and six black bottles by his side.

"I have drunk with the Governor of St. Kitt's when he was sick," said he, "and God forbid that I should ever try to keep pace with him when he is well."

The voyage of the *Morning Star* was a successful one, and in about three weeks she was at the mouth of the British Channel. From the

first day the infirm Governor had begun to recover his strength, and before they were half-way across the Atlantic he was, save only for his eyes, as well as any man upon the ship. Those who uphold the nourishing qualities of wine might point to him in triumph, for never a night passed that he did not repeat the performance of his first one. And yet he would be out upon deck in the early morning as fresh and brisk as the best of them, peering about with his weak eyes, and asking questions about the sails and the rigging, for he was anxious to learn the ways of the sea. And he made up for the deficiency of his eyes by obtaining leave from the captain that the New England seaman—he who had been cast away in the boat—should lead him about, and above all that he should sit beside him when he played cards and count the number of the pips, for unaided he could not tell the king from the knave.

It was natural that this Evanson should do the Governor willing service, since the one was the victim of the vile Sharkey, and the other was his avenger. One could see that it was a pleasure to the big American to lend his arm to the invalid, and at night he would stand with all respect behind his chair in the cabin and lay his great stub-nailed forefinger upon the card which he should play. Between them there was little in the pockets either of Captain Scarrow or of Morgan, the first mate, by the time they sighted the Lizard.

And it was not long before they found that all they had heard of the high temper of Sir Charles Ewan fell short of the mark. At a sign of opposition or a word of argument his chin would shoot out from his cravat, his masterful nose would be cocked at a higher and more insolent angle, and his bamboo cane would whistle up over his shoulder. He cracked it once over the head of the carpenter when the man had accidentally jostled him upon the deck. Once, too, when there was some grumbling and talk of a mutiny over the state of the provisions, he was of opinion that they should not wait for the dogs to rise, but that they should march forward and set upon them until they had trounced the devilment out of them. "Give me a knife and a bucket!" he cried with an oath, and could hardly be withheld from setting forth alone to deal with the spokesman of the seamen.

Captain Scarrow had to remind him that though he might be only answerable to himself at St. Kitt's, killing became murder upon the high seas. In politics he was, as became his official position, a stout

prop of the House of Hanover, and he swore in his cups that he had never met a jacobite without pistolling him where he stood. Yet for all his vapouring and his violence he was so good a companion, with such a stream of strange anecdote and reminiscence, that Scarrow and Morgan had never known a voyage pass so pleasantly.

And then at length came the last day, when, after passing the island, they had struck land again at the high white cliffs at Beachy Head. As evening fell the ship lay rolling in an oily calm, a league off from Winchelsea, with the long dark snout of Dungeness jutting out in front of her. Next morning they would pick up their pilot at the Foreland, and Sir Charles might meet the king's ministers at Westminster before the evening. The boatswain had the watch, and the three friends were met for a last turn of cards in the cabin, the faithful American still serving as eyes to the Governor. There was a good stake upon the table, for the sailors had tried on this last night to win their losses back from their passenger. Suddenly he threw his cards down, and swept all the money into the pocket of his long-flapped silken waistcoat.

"The game's mine!" said he.

"Heh, Sir Charles, not so fast!" cried Captain Scarrow; "you have not played out the hand, and we are not the losers."

"Sink you for a liar!" said the Governor. "I tell you that I *have* played out the hand, and that you *are* a loser." He whipped off his wig and his glasses as he spoke, and there was a high, bald forehead, and a pair of shifty blue eyes with the red rims of a bull terrier.

"Good God!" cried the mate. "It's Sharkey!"

The two sailors sprang from their seats, but the big American castaway had put his huge back against the cabin door, and he held a pistol in each of his hands. The passenger had also laid a pistol upon the scattered cards in front of him, and he burst into his high, neighing laugh.

"Captain Sharkey is the name, gentlemen," said he, "and this is Roaring Ned Galloway, the quartermaster of the *Happy Delivery*. We made it hot, so they marooned us: me on a dry Tortuga cay, and him in an oarless boat. You dogs—you poor, fond, water-hearted dogs—we hold you at the end of our pistols!"

"You may shoot, or you may not!" cried Scarrow, striking his hand upon the breast of his frieze jacket. "If it's my last breath, Sharkey,

I tell you that you are a bloody rogue and miscreant, with a halter and hell-fire in store for you!"

"There's a man of spirit, and one of my own kidney, and he's going to make a very pretty death of it!" cried Sharkey. "There's no one aft save the man at the wheel, so you may keep your breath, for you'll need it soon. Is the dingey astern, Ned?"

"Ay, ay, captain!"

"And the other boats scuttled?"

"I bored them all in three places."

"Then we shall have to leave you, Captain Scarrow. You look as if you hadn't quite got your bearings yet. Is there anything you'd like to ask me?"

"I believe you're the devil himself!" cried the captain. "Where is the Governor of St. Kitt's?"

"When last I saw him his Excellency was in bed with his throat cut. When I broke prison I learnt from my friends—for Captain Sharkey has those who love him in every port—that the Governor was starting for Europe under a master who had never seen him. I climbed his verandah, and I paid him the little debt that I owed him. Then I came aboard you with such of his things as I had need of, and a pair of glasses to hide these tell-tale eyes of mine, and I have ruffled it as a governor should. Now, Ned, you can get to work upon them."

"Help! Help! Watch ahoy!" yelled the mate; but the butt of the pirate's pistol crashed down on to his head, and he dropped like a pitched ox. Scarrow rushed for the door, but the sentinel clapped his hand over his mouth, and threw his other arm around his waist.

"No use, Master Scarrow," said Sharkey. "Let us see you go down on your knees and beg for your life."

"I'll see you—" cried Scarrow, shaking his mouth clear.

"Twist his arm round, Ned. Now will you?"

"No; not if you twist it off."

"Put an inch of your knife into him."

"You may put six inches, and then I won't."

"Sink me, but I like his spirit!" cried Sharkey. "Put your knife in your pocket, Ned. You've saved your skin, Scarrow, and it's a pity so stout a man should not take to the only trade where a pretty fellow can pick up a living. You must be born for no common death, Scar-

row, since you have lain at my mercy and lived to tell the story. Tie him up, Ned."

"To the stove, captain?"

"Tut, tut! there's a fire in the stove. None of your rover tricks, Ned Galloway, unless they are called for, or I'll let you know which of us two is captain and which is quartermaster. Make him fast to the table."

"Nay, I thought you meant to roast him!" said the quartermaster. "You surely do not mean to let him go?"

"If you and I were marooned on a Bahama cay, Ned Galloway, it is still for me to command and for you to obey. Sink you for a villain, do you dare to question my orders?"

"Nay, nay, Captain Sharkey, not so hot, sir!" said the quartermaster, and lifting Scarrow like a child, he laid him on the table. With the quick dexterity of a seaman, he tied his spreadeagled hands and feet with a rope which was passed underneath, and gagged him securely with the long cravat which used to adorn the chin of the Governor of St. Kitt's.

"Now, Captain Scarrow, we must take our leave of you," said the pirate. "If I had half a dozen of my brisk boys at my heels I should have had your cargo and your ship, but Roaring Ned could not find a foremast hand with the spirit of a mouse. I see there are some small craft about, and we shall get one of them. When Captain Sharkey has a boat he can get a smack, when he has a smack he can get a brig, when he has a brig he can get a barque, and when he has a barque he'll soon have a full-rigged ship of his own—so make haste into London town, or I may be coming back, after all, for the *Morning Star.*"

Captain Scarrow heard the key turn in the lock as they left the cabin. Then, as he strained at his bonds, he heard their footsteps pass up the companion and along the quarter-deck to where the dingey hung in the stern. Then, still struggling and writhing, he heard the creak of the falls and the splash of the boat in the water. In a mad fury he tore and dragged at his ropes, until at last, with frayed wrists and ankles, he rolled from the table, sprang over the dead mate, kicked his way through the closed door, and rushed hatless on to the deck.

"Ahoy! Peterson, Armitage, Wilson!" he screamed. "Cutlasses and pistols! Clear away the long-boat! Clear away the gig! Sharkey,

the pirate, is in yonder dingey. Whistle up the larboard watch, bo'sun, and tumble into the boats all hands."

Down splashed the long-boat and down splashed the gig, but in an instant the coxswains and crews were swarming up the falls on to the deck once more.

"The boats are scuttled!" they cried. "They are leaking like a sieve,"

The captain gave a bitter curse. He had been beaten and outwitted at every point. Above was a cloudless, starlit sky, with neither wind nor the promise of it. The sails flapped idly in the moonlight. Far away lay a fishing-smack, with the men clustering over their net.

Close to them was the little dingey, dipping and lifting over the shining swell.

"They are dead men!" cried the captain. "A shout all together, boys, to warn them of their danger."

But it was too late.

At that very moment the dingey shot into the shadow of the fishing-boat. There were two rapid pistol-shots, a scream, and then another pistol-shot, followed by silence. The clustering fishermen had disappeared. And then, suddenly, as the first puffs of a land-breeze came out from the Sussex shore, the boom swung out, the mainsail filled, and the little craft crept out with her nose to the Atlantic.

II

The Dealings of Captain Sharkey with Stephen Craddock

Careening was a very necessary operation for the old pirate. On his superior speed he depended both for overhauling the trader and escaping the man-of-war. But it was impossible to retain his sailing qualities unless he periodically—once a year, at the least—cleared his vessel's bottom from the long, trailing plants and crusting barnacles which gather so rapidly in the tropical seas.

For this purpose he lightened his vessel, thrust her into some narrow inlet where she would be left high and dry at low water, fastened blocks and tackles to her masts to pull her over on to her bilge, and then scraped her thoroughly from rudder-post to cutwater.

During the weeks which were thus occupied the ship was, of course,

defenceless; but, on the other hand, she was unapproachable by anything heavier than an empty hull, and the place for careening was chosen with an eye to secrecy, so that there was no great danger.

So secure did the captains feel, that it was not uncommon for them, at such times, to leave their ships under a sufficient guard and to start off in the long-boat, either upon a sporting expedition or, more frequently, upon a visit to some outlying town, where they turned the heads of the women by their swaggering gallantry, or broached pipes of wine in the market square, with a threat to pistol all who would not drink with them.

Sometimes they would even appear in cities of the size of Charleston, and walk the streets with their clattering sidearms—an open scandal to the whole law-abiding colony. Such visits are not always paid with impunity. It was one of them, for example, which provoked Lieutenant Maynard to hack off Blackbeard's head, and to spear it upon the end of his bowsprit. But, as a rule, the pirate ruffled and bullied and drabbed without let or hindrance until it was time for him to go back to his ship once more.

There was one pirate, however, who never crossed even the skirts of civilization, and that was the sinister Sharkey, of the barque *Happy Delivery*. It may have been from his morose and solitary temper, or, as is more probable, that he knew that his name upon the coast was such that outraged humanity would, against all odds, have thrown themselves upon him, but never once did he show his face in a settlement.

When his ship was laid up he would leave her under the charge of Ned Galloway—her New England quartermaster—and would take long voyages in his boat, sometimes, it was said, for the purpose of burying his share of the plunder, and sometimes to shoot the wild oxen of Hispaniola, which, when dressed and barbecued, provided provisions for his next voyage. In the latter case the barque would come round to some prearranged spot to pick him up and take on board what he had shot.

There had always been a hope in the islands that Sharkey might be taken on one of these occasions; and at last there came news to Kingston which seemed to justify an attempt upon him. It was brought by an elderly logwood-cutter who had fallen into the pirate's hands, and in some freak of drunken benevolence had been allowed to get

away with nothing worse than a slit nose and a drubbing. His account was recent and definite. The *Happy Delivery* was careening at Torpec on the south-west of Hispaniola. Sharkey, with four men, was buccaneering on the outlying island of La Vache. The blood of a hundred murdered crews was calling out for vengeance, and now at last it seemed as if it might not call in vain.

Sir Edward Compton, the high-nosed, red-faced Governor, sitting in solemn conclave with the commandant and the head of the council, was sorely puzzled in his mind as to how he should use this chance. There was no man-of-war nearer than Jamestown, and she was a clumsy old fly-boat, which could neither overhaul the pirate on the seas, nor reach her in a shallow inlet. There were forts and artillerymen both at Kingston and Port Royal, but no soldiers available for an expedition.

A private venture might be fitted out—and there were many who had a blood-feud with Sharkey,—but what could a private venture do? The pirates were numerous and desperate. As to taking Sharkey and his four companions, that, of course, would be easy if they could get at them; but how were they to get at them on a large well-wooded island like La Vache, full of wild hills and impenetrable jungles? A reward was offered to whoever could find a solution, and that brought a man to the front who had a singular plan, and was himself prepared to carry it out.

Stephen Craddock had been that most formidable person, the Puritan gone wrong. Sprung from a decent Salem family, his ill-doing seemed to be a recoil from the austerity of their religion, and he brought to vice all the physical strength and energy with which the virtues of his ancestors had endowed him. He was ingenious, fearless, and exceedingly tenacious of purpose, so that when he was still young his name became notorious upon the American coast.

He was the same Craddock who was tried for his life in Virginia for the slaying of the Seminole Chief, and, though he escaped, it was well known that he had corrupted the witnesses and bribed the judge. Afterwards, as a slaver, and even, as it was hinted, as a pirate, he had left an evil name behind him in the Bight of Benin. Finally he had returned to Jamaica with a considerable fortune, and had settled down to a life of sombre dissipation. This was the man, gaunt, au-

stere, and dangerous, who now waited upon the Governor with a plan for the extirpation of Sharkey.

Sir Edward received him with little enthusiasm, for in spite of some rumours of conversion and reformation, he had always regarded him as an infected sheep who might taint the whole of his little flock. Craddock saw the Governor's mistrust under his thin veil of formal and restrained courtesy.

"You've no call to fear me, sir," said he; "I'm a changed man from what you've known. I've seen the light again, of late, after losing sight of it for many a black year. It was through the ministration of the Rev. John Simons, of our own people. Sir, if your spirit should be in need of quickening, you would find a very sweet savor in his discourse."

The Governor cocked his Episcopalian nose at him.

"You came here to speak of Sharkey, Master Craddock," said he.

"The man Sharkey is a vessel of wrath," said Craddock. "His wicked horn has been exalted over long, and it is borne in upon me that if I can cut him off and utterly destroy him, it will be a goodly deed, and one which may atone for many backslidings in the past. A plan has been given to me whereby I may encompass his destruction."

The Governor was keenly interested, for there was a grim and practical air about the man's freckled face which showed that he was in earnest. After all, he was a seaman and a fighter, and, if it were true that he was eager to atone for his past, no better man could be chosen for the business.

"This will be a dangerous task, Master Craddock," said he.

"If I meet my death at it, it may be that it will cleanse the memory of an ill-spent life. I have much to atone for."

The Governor did not see his way to contradict him.

"What was your plan?" he asked.

"You have heard that Sharkey's barque, the *Happy Delivery*, came from this very port of Kingston?"

"It belonged to Mr. Codrington, and it was taken by Sharkey, who scuttled his own sloop and moved into her because she was faster," said Sir Edward.

"Yes; but it may be that you have never heard that Mr. Codrington has a sister ship, the *White Rose*, which lies even now in the harbor,

and which is so like the pirate, that, if it were not for a white paint line, none could tell them apart."

"Ah! and what of that?" asked the Governor keenly, with the air of one who is just on the edge of an idea.

"By the help of it this man shall be delivered into our hands."

"And how?"

"I will paint out the streak upon the *White Rose*, and make it in all things like the *Happy Delivery*. Then I will set sail for the Island of La Vache, where this man is slaying the wild oxen. When he sees me he will surely mistake me for his own vessel which he is awaiting, and he will come on board to his own undoing."

It was a simple plan, and yet it seemed to the Governor that it might be effective. Without hesitation he gave Craddock permission to carry it out, and to take any steps he liked in order to further the object which he had in view. Sir Edward was not very sanguine, for many attempts had been made upon Sharkey, and their results had shown that he was as cunning as he was ruthless. But this gaunt Puritan with the evil record was cunning and ruthless also.

The contest of wits between two such men as Sharkey and Craddock appealed to the Governor's acute sense of sport, and though he was inwardly convinced that the chances were against him, he backed his man with the same loyalty which he would have shown to his horse or his cock.

Haste was, above all things, necessary, for upon any day the careening might be finished, and the pirates out at sea once more. But there was not very much to do, and there were many willing hands to do it, so the second day saw the *White Rose* beating out for the open sea. There were many seamen in the port who knew the lines and rig of the pirate barque, and not one of them could see the slightest difference in this counterfeit. Her white side line had been painted out, her masts and yards were smoked, to give them the dingy appearance of the weather-beaten rover, and a large diamond-shaped patch was let into her fore-topsail.

Her crew were volunteers, many of them being men who had sailed with Stephen Craddock before—the mate, Joshua Hird, an old slaver, had been his accomplice in many voyages, and came now at the bidding of his chief.

The avenging barque sped across the Caribbean Sea. and, at the

sight of that patched topsail, the little craft which they met flew left and right like frightened trout in a pool. On the fourth evening Point Abacou bore five miles to the north and east of them.

On the fifth they were at anchor in the Bay of Tortoises at the Island of La Vache, where Sharkey and his four men had been hunting. It was a well-wooded place, with the palms and underwood growing down to the thin crescent of silver sand which skirted the shore. They had hoisted the black flag and the red pennant, but no answer came from the shore. Craddock strained his eyes, hoping every instant to see a boat shoot out to them with Sharkey seated in the sheets. But the night passed away, and a day and yet another night, without any sign of the men whom they were endeavouring to trap. It looked as if they were already gone.

On the second morning Craddock went ashore in search of some proof whether Sharkey and his men were still upon the island. What he found reassured him greatly. Close to the shore was a boucan of green wood, such as was used for preserving the meat, and a great store of barbecued strips of ox-flesh was hung upon lines all round it. The pirate ship had not taken off her provisions, and therefore the hunters were still upon the island.

Why had they not shown themselves? Was it that they had detected that this was not their own ship? Or was it that they were hunting in the interior of the island, and were not on the lookout for a ship yet? Craddock was still hesitating between the two alternatives, when a Carib Indian came down with information. The pirates were in the island, he said, and their camp was a day's march from the sea. They had stolen his wife, and the marks of their stripes were still pink upon his brown back. Their enemies were his friends, and he would lead them to where they lay.

Craddock could not have asked for anything better; so early next morning, with a small party armed to the teeth, he set off under the guidance of the Carib. All day they struggled through brushwood and clambered over rocks, pushing their way further and further into the desolate heart of the island. Here and there they found traces of the hunters, the bones of a slain ox, or the marks of feet in a morass, and once, towards evening, it seemed to some of them that they heard the distant rattle of guns.

That night they spent under the trees, and pushed on again with

the earliest light. About noon they came to the huts of bark, which, the Carib told them, were the camp of the hunters, but they were silent and deserted. No doubt their occupants were away at the hunt and would return in the evening, so Craddock and his men lay in ambush in the brushwood around them. But no one came, and another night was spent in the forest. Nothing more could be done, and it seemed to Craddock that after the two days' absence it was time that he returned to his ship once more.

The return journey was less difficult, as they had already blazed a path for themselves. Before evening they found themselves once more at the Bay of Palms, and saw their ship riding at anchor where they had left her. Their boat and oars had been hauled up among the bushes, so they launched it and pulled out to the barque.

"No luck, then!" cried Joshua Hird, the mate, looking down with a pale face from the poop.

"His camp was empty, but he may come down to us yet," said Craddock, with his hand on the ladder.

Somebody upon deck began to laugh. "I think," said the mate, "that these men had better stay in the boat."

"Why so?"

"If you will come aboard, sir, you will understand it." He spoke in a curious hesitating fashion.

The blood flushed to Craddock's gaunt face.

"How is this, Master Hird?" he cried, springing up the side. "What mean you by giving orders to my boat's crew?"

But as he passed over the bulwarks, with one foot upon the deck and one knee upon the rail, a tow-bearded man, whom he had never before observed aboard his vessel, grabbed suddenly at his pistol. Craddock clutched at the fellow's wrist, but at the same instant his mate snatched the cutlass from his side.

"What roguery is this?" shouted Craddock, looking furiously around him. But the crew stood in little knots about the deck, laughing and whispering amongst themselves without showing any desire to go to his assistance. Even in that hurried glance Craddock noticed that they were dressed in the most singular manner, with long riding-coats, full-skirted velvet gowns and coloured ribands at their knees, more like men of fashion than seamen.

As he looked at their grotesque figures he struck his brow with his

clenched fist to be sure that he was awake. The deck seemed to be much dirtier than when he had left it, and there were strange, sun-blackened faces turned upon him from every side. Not one of them did he know save only Joshua Hird. Had the ship been captured in his absence? Were these Sharkey's men who were around him? At the thought he broke furiously away and tried to climb over to his boat, but a dozen hands were on him in an instant, and he was pushed aft through the open door of his own cabin.

And it was all different to the cabin which he had left. The floor was different, the ceiling was different, the furniture was different. His had been plain and austere. This was sumptuous and yet dirty, hung with rare velvet curtains splashed with wine-stains, and paneled with costly woods which were pocked with pistol-marks.

On the table was a great chart of the Caribbean Sea, and beside it, with compasses in his hand, sat a clean-shaven, pale-faced man with a fur cap and a claret-coloured coat of damask. Craddock turned white under his freckles as he looked upon the long, thin, high-nostrilled nose and the red-rimmed eyes which were turned upon him with the fixed, humorous gaze of the master player who has left his opponent without a move.

"Sharkey!" cried Craddock.

Sharkey's thin lips opened and he broke into his high, sniggering laugh.

"You fool!" he cried, and, leaning over, he stabbed Craddock's shoulder again and again with his compasses. "You poor, dull-witted fool, would you match yourself against me?"

It was not the pain of the wounds, but it was the contempt in Sharkey's voice which turned Craddock into a savage madman. He flew at the pirate, roaring with rage, striking, kicking, writhing, and foaming. It took six men to drag him down on to the floor amidst the splintered remains of the table—and not one of the six who did not bear the prisoner's mark upon him. But Sharkey still surveyed him with the same contemptuous eye. From outside there came the crash of breaking wood and the clamour of startled voices.

"What is that?" asked Sharkey.

"They have stove the boat with cold shot, and the men are in the water."

"Let them stay there," said the pirate. "Now, Craddock, you know

where you are. You are aboard my ship the *Happy Delivery,* and you lie at my mercy. I knew you for a stout seaman, you rogue, before you took to this long-shore canting. Your hands then were no cleaner than my own. Will you sign articles, as your mate has done, and join us, or shall I heave you over to follow your ship's company?"

"Where is my ship?" asked Craddock.

"Scuttled in the bay."

"And the hands?"

"In the bay, too."

"Then, I'm for the bay also."

"Hock him and heave him over," said Sharkey.

Many rough hands had dragged Craddock out upon deck, and Galloway, the quartermaster, had already drawn his hanger to cripple him, when Sharkey came hurrying from his cabin with an eager face.

"We can do better with the hound!" he cried. "Sink me if it is not a rare plan. Throw him into the sail-room with the irons on, and do you come here, quartermaster, that I may tell you what I have in my mind."

So Craddock, bruised and wounded in soul and body, was thrown into the dark sail-room, so fettered that he could not stir hand or foot, but his Northern blood was running strong in his veins, and his grim spirit aspired only to make such an ending as might go some way towards atoning for the evil of his life. All night he lay in the curve of the bilge listening to the rush of the water and the straining of the timbers which told him that the ship was at sea, and driving fast. In the early morning some one came crawling to him in the darkness over the heaps of sails.

"Here's rum and biscuits," said the voice of his late mate. "It's at the risk of my life, Master Craddock, that I bring them to you."

"It was you who trapped me and caught me as in a snare!" cried Craddock. "How shall you answer for what you have done?"

"What I did I did with the point of a knife betwixt my blade-bones."

"God forgive you for a coward, Joshua Hird. How came you into their hands?"

"Why, Master Craddock, the pirate ship came back from its careening upon the very day that you left us. They laid us aboard, and, short-handed as we were, with the best of the men ashore with you, we could offer but a poor defence. Some were cut down, and they

were the happiest. The others were killed afterwards. As to me, I saved my life by signing on with them."

"And they scuttled my ship?"

"They scuttled her, and then Sharkey and his men, who had been watching us from the brushwood, came off to the ship. His mainyard had been cracked and fished last voyage, so he had suspicions of us, seeing that ours was whole. Then he thought of laying the same trap for you which you had set for him."

Craddock groaned.

"How came I not to see that fished mainyard?" he muttered. "But whither are we bound?"

"We are running north and west."

"North and west! Then we are heading back towards Jamaica."

"With an eight-knot wind."

"Have you heard what they mean to do with me?"

"I have not heard. If you would but sign the articles—"

"Enough, Joshua Hird! I have risked my soul too often."

"As you wish! I have done what I could. Farewell!"

All that night and the next day the *Happy Delivery* ran before the easterly trades, and Stephen Craddock lay in the dark of the sail-room working patiently at his wrist-irons. One he had slipped off at the cost of a row of broken and bleeding knuckles, but, do what he would, he could not free the other, and his ankles were securely fastened.

From hour to hour he heard the swish of the water, and knew that the barque must be driving with all set in front of the trade wind. In that case they must be nearly back again to Jamaica by now. What plan could Sharkey have in his head, and what use did he hope to make of him? Craddock set his teeth, and vowed that if he had once been a villain from choice he would, at least, never be one by compulsion.

On the second morning Craddock became aware that sail had been reduced in the vessel, and that she was tacking slowly, with a light breeze on her beam. The varying slope of the sail-room and the sounds from the deck told his practised senses exactly what she was doing. The short reaches showed him that she was manœuvring near shore, and making for some definite point. If so, she must have reached Jamaica. But what could she be doing there?

And then suddenly there was a burst of hearty cheering from the deck, and then the crash of a gun above his head, and then the answering booming of guns from far over the water. Craddock sat up and strained his ears. Was the ship in action? Only the one gun had been fired, and though many had answered, there were none of the crashings which told of a shot coming home.

Then, if it was not an action, it must be a salute. But who would salute Sharkey, the pirate? It could only be another pirate ship which would do so. So Craddock lay back again with a groan, and continued to work at the manacle which still held his right wrist.

But suddenly there came the shuffling of steps outside, and he had hardly time to wrap the loose links round his free hand, when the door was unbolted and two pirates came in.

"Got your hammer, carpenter?" asked one, whom Craddock recognized as the big quartermaster. "Knock off his leg shackles, then. Better leave the bracelets—he's safer with them on."

With hammer and chisel the carpenter loosened the irons.

"What are you going to do with me?" asked Craddock.

"Come on deck and you'll see."

The sailor seized him by the arm and dragged him roughly to the foot of the companion. Above him was a square of blue sky cut across by the mizzen gaff, with the colours flying at the peak. But it was the sight of those colours which struck the breath from Stephen Craddock's lips. For there were two of them, and the British ensign was flying above the Jolly Rodger—the honest flag above that of the rogue.

For an instant Craddock stopped in amazement, but a brutal push from the pirates behind drove him up the companion ladder. As he stepped out upon deck, his eyes turned up to the main, and there again were the British colours flying above the red pennant, and all the shrouds and rigging were garlanded with streamers.

Had the ship been taken, then? But that was impossible, for there were the pirates clustering in swarms along the port bulwarks, and waving their hats joyously in the air. Most prominent of all was the renegade mate, standing on the foc'sle head, and gesticulating wildly. Craddock looked over the side to see what they were cheering at, and then in a flash he saw how critical was the moment.

On the port bow, and about a mile off, lay the white houses and

forts of Port Royal, with flags breaking out everywhere over their roofs. Right ahead was the opening of the palisades leading to the town of Kingston. Not more than a quarter of a mile off was a small sloop working out against the very slight wind. The British ensign was at her peak, and her rigging was all decorated. On her deck could be seen a dense crowd of people cheering and waving their hats, and the gleam of scarlet told that there were officers of the garrison among them.

In an instant, with the quick perception of a man of action, Craddock saw through it all. Sharkey, with that diabolical cunning and audacity which were among his main characteristics, was simulating the part which Craddock would himself have played, had he come back victorious. It was in *his* honour that the salutes were firing and the flags flying. It was to welcome *him* that this ship with the Governor, the commandant, and the chiefs of the island were approaching. In another ten minutes they would all be under the guns of the *Happy Delivery,* and Sharkey would have won the greatest stake that ever a pirate played for yet.

"Bring him forward," cried the pirate captain, as Craddock appeared between the carpenter and the quartermaster. "Keep the ports closed, but clear away the port guns, and stand by for a broadside. Another two cable lengths and we have them."

"They are edging away," said the boatswain. "I think they smell us."

"That's soon set right," said Sharkey, turning his filmy eyes upon Craddock. "Stand there, you—right there, where they can recognize you, with your hand on the guy, and wave your hat to them. Quick, or your brains will be over your coat. Put an inch of your knife into him, Ned. Now, will you wave your hat? Try him again, then. Hey, shoot him! stop him!"

But it was too late. Relying upon the manacles, the quartermaster had taken his hands for a moment off Craddock's arm. In that instant he had flung off the carpenter and, amid a spatter of pistol bullets, had sprung the bulwarks and was swimming for his life. He had been hit and hit again, but it takes many pistols to kill a resolute and powerful man who has his mind set upon doing something before he dies. He was a strong swimmer, and, in spite of the red trail which he left

in the water behind him, he was rapidly increasing his distance from the pirate.

"Give me a musket!" cried Sharkey, with a savage oath.

He was a famous shot, and his iron nerves never failed him in an emergency. The dark head appearing on the crest of a roller, and then swooping down on the other side, was already half-way to the sloop. Sharkey dwelt long upon his aim before he fired. With the crack of the gun the swimmer reared himself up in the water, waved his hands in a gesture of warning, and roared out in voice which rang over the bay. Then, as the sloop swung round her head-sails, and the pirate fired an impotent broadside, Stephen Craddock, smiling grimly in his death agony, sank slowly down to that golden couch which glimmered far beneath him.

III

How Copley Banks Slew Captain Sharkey

The Buccaneers were something higher than a mere band of marauders. They were a floating republic, with laws, usages, and discipline of their own. In their endless and remorseless quarrel with the Spaniards they had some semblance of right upon their side. Their bloody harryings of the cities of the Main were not more barbarous than the inroads of Spain upon the Netherlands—or upon the Caribs in these same American lands.

The chief of the Buccaneers, were he English or French, a Morgan or a Granmont, was still a responsible person, whose country might countenance him, or even praise him, so long as he refrained from any deed which might shock the leathery seventeenth-century conscience too outrageously. Some of them were touched with religion, and it is still remembered how Sawkins threw the dice overboard upon the Sabbath, and Daniel pistolled a man before the altar for irreverence.

But there came a day when the fleets of the Buccaneers no longer mustered at the Tortugas, and the solitary and outlawed pirate took their place. Yet even with him the tradition of restraint and discipline still lingered; and among the early pirates, the Avorys, the Englands, and the Robertses, there remained some respect for human sentiment. They were more dangerous to the merchant than to the seaman.

But they in turn were replaced by more savage and desperate men, who frankly recognized that they would get no quarter in their war with the human race, and who swore that they would give as little as they got. Of their histories we know little that is trustworthy. They wrote no memoirs and left no trace, save an occasional blackened and bloodstained derelict adrift upon the face of the Atlantic. Their deeds could only be surmised from the long roll of ships who never made their port.

Searching the records of history, it is only here and there in an old-world trial that the veil that shrouds them seems for an instant to be lifted, and we catch a glimpse of some amazing and grotesque brutality behind. Such was the breed of Ned Low, of Gow the Scotchman, and of the infamous Sharkey, whose coal-black barque, the *Happy Delivery*, was known from the Newfoundland Banks to the mouths of the Orinoco as the dark forerunner of misery and of death.

There were many men, both among the islands and on the main, who had a blood feud with Sharkey, but not one who had suffered more bitterly than Copley Banks, of Kingston. Banks had been one of the leading sugar merchants of the West Indies. He was a man of position, a member of the Council, the husband of a Percival, and the cousin of the Governor of Virginia. His two sons had been sent to London to be educated, and their mother had gone over to bring them back. On their return voyage the ship, the *Duchess of Cornwall*, fell into the hands of Sharkey, and the whole family met with an infamous death.

Copley Banks said little when he heard the news, but he sank into a morose and enduring melancholy. He neglected his business, avoided his friends, and spent much of his time in the low taverns of the fishermen and seamen. There, amidst riot and devilry, he sat silently puffing at his pipe, with a set face and a smouldering eye. It was generally supposed that his misfortunes had shaken his wits, and his old friends looked at him askance, for the company which he kept was enough to bar him from honest men.

From time to time there came rumours of Sharkey over the sea. Sometimes it was from some schooner which had seen a great flame upon the horizon, and approaching to offer help to the burning ship, had fled away at the sight of the sleek, black barque, lurking like a wolf near a mangled sheep. Sometimes it was a frightened trader, which had

come tearing in with her canvas curved like a lady's bodice, because she had seen a patched fore-topsail rising slowly above the violet water-line. Sometimes it was from a Coaster, which had found a waterless Bahama Cay littered with sun-dried bodies.

Once there came a man who had been mate of a Guineaman, and who had escaped from the pirate's hands. He could not speak—for reasons which Sharkey could best supply—but he could write, and he did write, to the very great interest of Copley Banks. For hours they sat together over the map, and the dumb man pointed here and there to outlying reefs and tortuous inlets, while his companion sat smoking in silence, with his unvarying face and his fiery eyes.

One morning, some two years after his misfortune, Mr. Copley Banks strode into his own office with his old air of energy and alertness. The manager stared at him in surprise, for it was months since he had shown any interest in business.

"Good morning, Mr. Banks!" said he.

"Good morning, Freeman. I see that *Ruffling Harry* is in the Bay."

"Yes, sir; she clears for the Windward Islands on Wednesday."

"I have other plans for her, Freeman. I have determined upon a slaving venture to Whydah."

"But her cargo is ready, sir."

"Then it must come out again, Freeman. My mind is made up, and the *Ruffling Harry* must go slaving to Whydah."

All argument and persuasion were vain, so the manager had dolefully to clear the ship once more.

And then Copley Banks began to make preparations for his African voyage. It appeared that he relied upon force rather than barter for the filling of his hold, for he carried none of those showy trinkets which savages love, but the brig was fitted with eight nine-pounder guns and racks full of muskets and cutlasses. The after sailroom next the cabin was transformed into a powder magazine, and she carried as many round shot as a well-found privateer. Water and provisions were shipped for a long voyage.

But the preparation of his ship's company was most surprising. It made Freeman, the manager, realize that there was truth in the rumour that his master had taken leave of his senses. For, under one pretext or another, he began to dismiss the old and tried hands, who had served the firm for years, and in their place he embarked the scum of

the port—men whose reputations were so vile that the lowest crimp would have been ashamed to furnish them.

There was Birthmark Sweetlocks, who was known to have been present at the killing of the logwood cutters, so that his hideous scarlet disfigurement was put down by the fanciful as being a red afterglow from that great crime. He was first mate, and under him was Israel Martin, a little sun-wilted fellow who had served with Howell Davies at the taking of Cape Coast Castle.

The crew were chosen from amongst those whom Banks had met and known in their own infamous haunts, and his own table-steward was a haggard-faced man, who gobbled at you when he tried to talk. His beard had been shaved, and it was impossible to recognize him as the same man whom Sharkey had placed under the knife, and who had escaped to tell his experiences to Copley Banks.

These doings were not unnoticed, nor yet uncommented upon in the town of Kingston. The Commandant of the troops—Major Harvey, of the Artillery—made serious representations to the Governor.

"She is not a trader, but a small warship," said he. "I think it would be as well to arrest Copley Banks and to seize the vessel."

"What do you suspect?" asked the Governor, who was a slow-witted man, broken down with fevers and port wine.

"I suspect," said the soldier, "that it is Stede Bonnet over again."

Now, Stede Bonnet was a planter of high reputation and religious character, who, from some sudden and overpowering freshet of wildness in his blood, had given up everything in order to start off pirating in the Caribbean Sea. The example was a recent one, and it had caused the utmost consternation in the islands. Governors had before now been accused of being in league with pirates, and of receiving commissions upon their plunder, so that any want of vigilance was open to a sinister construction.

"Well, Major Harvey," said he, "I am vastly sorry to do anything which may offend my friend Copley Banks, for many a time have my knees been under his mahagony, but in face of what you say there is no choice for me but to order you to board the vessel and to satisfy yourself as to her character and destination."

So at one in the morning Major Harvey, with a launchful of his soldiers, paid a surprise visit to the *Ruffling Harry*, with the result that they picked up nothing more solid than a hempen cable floating at the

moorings. It had been slipped by the brig, whose owner had scented danger. She had already passed the Palisades, and was beating out against the northeast trades on a course for the Windward Passage.

When upon the next morning the brig had left Morant Point a mere haze upon the Southern horizon, the men were called aft, and Copley Banks revealed his plans to them. He had chosen them, he said, as brisk boys and lads of spirit, who would rather run some risk upon the sea than starve for a living upon the shore. King's ships were few and weak, and they could master any trader who might come their way. Others had done well at the business, and with a handy, well-found vessel, there was no reason why they should not turn their tarry jackets into velvet coats. If they were prepared to sail under the black flag, he was ready to command them; but if any wished to withdraw, they might have the gig and row back to Jamaica.

Four men out of six-and-forty asked for their discharge, went over the ship's side into the boat, and rowed away amidst the jeers and howlings of the crew. The rest assembled aft, and drew up the articles of their association. A square of black tarpaulin had the white skull painted upon it, and was hoisted amidst cheering at the main.

Officers were elected, and the limits of their authority fixed. Copley Banks was chosen Captain, but, as there are no mates upon a pirate craft, Birthmark Sweetlocks became quartermaster, and Israel Martin the boatswain. There was no difficulty in knowing what was the custom of the brotherhood, for half the men at least had served upon pirates before. Food should be the same for all, and no man should interfere with another man's drink! The Captain should have a cabin, but all hands should be welcome to enter it when they chose.

All should share and share alike, save only the captain, quartermaster, boatswain, carpenter, and master-gunner, who had from a quarter to a whole share extra. He who saw a prize first should have the best weapon taken out of her. He who boarded her first should have the richest suit of clothes aboard of her. Every man might treat his own prisoner, be it man or woman, after his own fashion. If a man flinched from his gun, the quartermaster should pistol him. These were some of the rules which the crew of the *Ruffling Harry* subscribed by putting forty-two crosses at the foot of the paper upon which they had been drawn.

So a new rover was afloat upon the seas, and her name before a year

was over became as well known as that of the *Happy Delivery*. From the Bahamas to the Leewards, and from the Leewards to the Windwards, Copley Banks became the rival of Sharkey and the terror of traders. For a long time the barque and the brig never met, which was the more singular, as the *Ruffling Harry* was forever looking in at Sharkey's resorts; but at last one day, when she was passing down the inlet of Coxon's Hole, at the east end of Cuba, with the intention of careening, there was the *Happy Delivery*, with her blocks and tackle-falls already rigged for the same purpose.

Copley Banks fired a shotted salute and hoisted the green trumpeter ensign, as the custom was among gentlemen of the sea. Then he dropped his boat and went aboard.

Captain Sharkey was not a man of genial mood, nor had he any kindly sympathy for those who were of the same trade as himself. Copley Banks found him seated astride upon one of the after guns, with his New England quartermaster, Ned Galloway, and a crowd of roaring ruffians standing about him. Yet none of them roared with quite such assurance when Sharkey's pale face and filmy blue eyes were turned upon him.

He was in his shirt-sleeves, with his cambric frills breaking through his open red satin long-flapped vest. The scorching sun seemed to have no power upon his fleshless frame, for he wore a low fur cap, as though it had been winter. A many-coloured band of silk passed across his body and supported a short murderous sword, while his broad, brass-buckled belt was stuffed with pistols.

"Sink you for a poacher!" he cried as Copley Banks passed over the bulwarks. "I will drub you within an inch of your life, and that inch also! What mean you by fishing in my waters?"

Copley Banks looked at him, and his eyes were like those of a traveller who sees his home at last.

"I am glad that we are of one mind," said he, "for I am myself of opinion that the seas are not large enough for the two of us. But if you will take your sword and pistols and come upon a sand-bank with me, then the world will be rid of a damned villain whichever way it goes."

"Now, this is talking!" cried Sharkey, jumping off the gun and holding out his hand. "I have not met many who could look John Sharkey in the eyes and speak with a full breath. May the devil seize me if I do

not choose you as a consort! But if you play me false, then I will come aboard of you and gut you upon your own poop."

"And I pledge you the same!" said Copley Banks, and so the two pirates became sworn comrades to each other.

That summer they went north as far as the Newfoundland Banks, and harried the New York traders and the whale-ships from New England. It was Copley Banks who captured the Liverpool ship, *House of Hanover,* but it was Sharkey who fastened her master to the windlass and pelted him to death with empty claret-bottles.

Together they engaged the King's ship, *Royal Fortune,* which had been sent in search of them, and beat her off after a night action of five hours, the drunken, raving crews fighting naked in the light of the battle-lanterns, with a bucket of rum and a pannikin laid by the tackles of every gun. They ran to Topsail Inlet in North Carolina to refit, and then in the spring they were at the Grand Caicos, ready for a long cruise down the West Indies.

By this time Sharkey and Copley Banks had become very excellent friends, for Sharkey loved a whole-hearted villain, and he loved a man of metal, and it seemed to him that the two met in the captain of the *Ruffling Harry.* It was long before he gave his confidence to him, for cold suspicion lay deep in his character. Never once would he trust himself outside his own ship and away from his own men.

But Copley Banks came often on board the *Happy Delivery,* and joined Sharkey in many of his morose debauches, so that at last any misgivings of the latter were set at rest. He knew nothing of the evil that he had done to his new boon companion, for of his many victims how could he remember the woman and the two boys whom he had slain with such levity so long ago! When, therefore, he received a challenge to himself and to his quartermaster for a carouse upon the last evening of their stay at the Caicos Bank, he saw no reason to refuse.

A well-found passenger ship had been rifled the week before, so their fare was of the best, and after supper five of them drank deeply together. There were the two captains, Birthmark Sweetlocks, Ned Galloway, and Israel Martin, the old buccaneersman. To wait upon them was the dumb steward, whose head Sharkey split with his glass, because he had been too slow in the filling of it.

The quartermaster had slipped Sharkey's pistols away from him, for

it was an old joke with him to fire them cross-handed under the table, and see who was the luckiest man. It was a pleasantry which had cost his boatswain his leg, so now, when the table was cleared, they would coax Sharkey's weapons away from him on the excuse of the heat, and lay them out of his reach.

The Captain's cabin of the *Ruffling Harry* was in a deck-house upon the poop, and a stern-chaser gun was mounted at the back of it. Round shot were racked round the wall, and three great hogsheads of powder made a stand for dishes and for bottles. In this grim room the five pirates sang and roared and drank, while the silent steward still filled up their glasses, and passed the box and the candle round for their tobacco-pipes. Hour after hour the talk became fouler, the voices hoarser, the curses and shoutings more incoherent, until three of the five had closed their blood-shot eyes, and dropped their swimming heads upon the table.

Copley Banks and Sharkey were left face to face, the one because he had drunk the least, the other because no amount of liquor would ever shake his iron nerve or warm his sluggish blood. Behind him stood the watchful steward, for ever filling up his waning glass. From without came the low lapping of the tide, and from over the water a sailor's chanty from the barque.

In the windless tropical night the words came clearly to their ears:

"A trader sailed from Stepney Town,
Wake her up! Shake her up! Try her with the mainsail!
A trader sailed from Stepney Town
With a keg full of gold and a velvet gown.
Ho, the bully Rover Jack,
Waiting with his yard aback
Out upon the Lowland Sea."

The two boon companions sat listening in silence. Then Copley Banks glanced at the steward, and the man took a coil of rope from the shot-rack behind him.

"Captain Sharkey," said Copley Banks, "do you remember the *Duchess of Cornwall*, hailing from London, which you took and sank three years ago off the Statira Shoal?"

"Curse me if I can bear their names in mind," said Sharkey. "We did as many as ten ships a week about that time."

"There were a mother and two sons among the passengers. Maybe that will bring it back to your mind."

Captain Sharkey leant back in thought, with his huge thin beak of a nose jutting upwards. Then he burst suddenly into a high treble, neighing laugh. He remembered it, he said, and he added details to prove it.

"But burn me if it had not slipped from my mind!" he cried. "How came you to think of it?"

"It was of interest to me," said Copley Banks, "for the woman was my wife and the lads were my only sons."

Sharkey stared across at his companion, and saw that the smouldering fire which lurked always in his eyes had burned up into a lurid flame. He read their menace, and he clapped his hands to his empty belt. Then he turned to seize a weapon, but the bight of a rope was cast round him, and in an instant his arms were bound to his side. He fought like a wild cat and screamed for help.

"Ned!" he yelled. "Ned! Wake up! Here's damned villainy! Help, Ned, help!"

But the three men were far too deeply sunk in their swinish sleep for any voice to wake them. Round and round went the rope, until Sharkey was swathed like a mummy from ankle to neck. They propped him stiff and helpless against a powder barrel, and they gagged him with a handkerchief, but his filmy, red-rimmed eyes still looked curses at them. The dumb man chattered in his exultation, and Sharkey winced for the first time when he saw the empty mouth before him. He understood that vengeance, slow and patient, had dogged him long, and clutched him at last.

The two captors had their plans all arranged, and they were somewhat elaborate.

First of all they stove the heads of two of the great powder barrels, and they heaped the contents out upon the table and floor. They piled it round and under the three drunken men, until each sprawled in a heap of it. Then they carried Sharkey to the gun and they triced him sitting over the porthole, with his body about a foot from the muzzle. Wriggle as he would he could not move an inch either to right or left, and the dumb man trussed him up with a sailor's cunning, so that there was no chance that he should work free.

"Now, you bloody devil," said Copley Banks, softly, "you must

listen to what I have to say to you, for they are the last words that you will hear. You are my man now, and I have bought you at a price, for I have given all that a man can give here below, and I have given my soul as well.

"To reach you I have had to sink to your level. For two years I strove against it, hoping that some other way might come, but I learnt that there was no other way. I've robbed and I have murdered—worse still, I have laughed and lived with you—and all for the one end. And now my time has come, and you will die as I would have you die, seeing the shadow creeping slowly upon you and the devil waiting for you in the shadow."

Sharkey could hear the hoarse voices of his rovers singing their chanty over the water:

"Where is the trader of Stepney Town?
Wake her up! Shake her up! Every stick a-bending!
Where is the trader of Stepney Town?
His gold's on the capstan, his blood's on his gown.
All for bully Rover Jack,
Reaching on the weather tack
Right across the Lowland Sea."

The words came clear to his ear, and just outside he could hear two men pacing backwards and forwards upon the deck. And yet he was helpless, staring down the mouth of the nine-pounder, unable to move an inch or to utter so much as a groan. Again there came the burst of voices from the deck of the barque:

"So it's up and it's over to Stornoway Bay,
Pack it on! Crack it on! Try her with the stun-sails!
It's off on a bowline to Stornoway Bay,
Where the liquor is good and the lasses are gay,
Waiting for their bully Jack,
Watching for him sailing back,
Right across the Lowland Sea."

To the dying pirate the jovial words and rollicking tune made his own fate seem the harsher, but there was no softening in his venomous blue eyes. Copley Banks had brushed away the priming of the gun, and had sprinkled fresh powder over the touch-hole. Then he had

taken up the candle and cut it to the length of about an inch. This he placed upon the loose powder at the breach of the gun. Then he scattered powder thickly over the floor beneath, so that when the candle fell at the recoil it must explode the huge pile in which the three drunkards were wallowing.

"You've made others look death in the face, Sharkey," said he; "now it has come to be your own turn. You and these swine here shall go together!" He lit the candle-end as he spoke, and blew out the other lights upon the table. Then he passed out with the dumb man, and locked the cabin door upon the outer side. But before he closed it he took an exultant look backwards, and received one last curse from those unconquerable eyes. In the single dim circle of light that ivory-white face, with the gleam of moisture upon the high, bald forehead, was the last that was ever seen of Sharkey.

There was a skiff alongside, and in it Copley Banks and the dumb steward made their way to the beach, and looked back upon the brig riding in the moonlight just outside the shadow of the palm trees. They waited and waited, watching that dim light which shone through the stern port. And then at last there came the dull thud of a gun, and an instant later the shattering crash of the explosion. The long, sleek black barque, the sweep of white sand, and the fringe of nodding, feathery palm trees sprang into dazzling light and back into darkness again. Voices screamed and called upon the bay.

Then Copley Banks, his heart singing within him, touched his companion upon the shoulder, and they plunged together into the lonely jungle of the Caicos.

The Rock Scorpions

ANONYMOUS

THE screw steamer *Jenny Jones* was lying alongside a coal-hulk at Gibraltar one October afternoon. By three o'clock her bunkers were nearly filled, and the captain was getting ready for casting off, when one of the natives came on board. Captain Hindhaugh looked about for something to throw at the visitor, and only the difficulty of selecting an efficient missile from a large and varied assortment prevented him from letting fly at once.

The "Scorpion," said, "Ah, no, no, Capeetan! No been throw nothin' at myself. Beesiness! I'se been com' for beesiness. Big thing, Capeetan!"

The last phrase was spoken with such a profound wink that Hindhaugh held his hand, and, addressing the man as one would an ill-conditioned dog, said, "Don't keep bowing and scraping there, you rascal! Get it out sharp!"

The Scorpion whispered, "No been talk up here. Keep ship one hour, two hour, three hour. You'se been com' with me, and I speak you somethin' myself."

Like many of his tribe, this interesting native spoke a kind of English which is not heard anywhere else on the Mediterranean shore. A few of the people on the Rock learn to talk very well to our men, but most of those who come about the ships use a picturesque lingo in which "myself" takes the place of quite a variety of parts of speech.

Hindhaugh invited the man below, and asked him to explain himself. The fellow leaned over the table and chattered on, throwing quick side glances at every few words.

"This been big thing, Capeetan. You get away a little; drop you anchor a little. Then three felucca com' alongside, and you'se been hoist bales. Then you'se go where agent say you. Very big thing. Five thousand sovereign."

"What is it? tobacco?"

"That been it."

"Where for?"

"Huelva."

"I'm not going out of Portuguese waters at no price."

"Ah, no, no, Cheesu, Capeetan—no! Five mile. We have felucca there ready. I'se been see him myself."

"What's the figure? what's the money?"

"You com' 'shore and see agent with myself."

Hindhaugh put a revolver in his pocket and went on deck; the Scorpion got ashore, and hung about with an air of innocence. The captain was about to follow when the man in charge of the hulk called out, "Do you intend to keep bumping us like this all night? Why don't you cast off? You're knocking us all to flinders."

Hindhaugh beckoned. "Look here, my good chap, it won't matter to you for a couple of hours. Let us lie till dusk, and then I'll get away. I've got important business ashore."

"That's very well, Captain. But look here; if there's anything on, I'm in it. You understand—I'm in it."

"You understand that, do you? Well then, I'll tell you to keep your mouth shut just now, or never another ton of coal will you put aboard of us as long as I run here."

"All right, Captain. No need to be nasty. You'll do the square thing, I bet."

Then Hindhaugh went ashore, and the Scorpion walked on ahead, gazing on architectural beauties with easy interest. Presently the two men came to a narrow stairway, and the Englishman gripped his revolver. A dark-eyed Spaniard was waiting on a landing, and held up two fingers when the guide passed. The Scorpion knocked at a greasy door, and an ugly fellow, with a cowl on, looked out and nodded. Hindhaugh stepped into a room that reeked with garlic and decay. Two men sat in the steamy dusk at the far side. An oily gentleman rose and bowed. "I'm the interpreter, Captain. You and this merchant must do your business through me. What'll you take to drink?"

"Get through your business, mister. I'm not wanting any drink."

In brief, jerky sentences the interpreter explained what was wanted.

"You steam slowly till you're near the Fleet. Then put all your men on and get the stuff up. This man goes with you, and he'll tell you where to go. Lie five miles off Huelva."

"I sha'n't go except to Portuguese waters."

"Good. Then the lighters will come and the men will discharge you."

"And now," said the captain, "what about me? How much?"

"One hundred and twenty pounds."

"Can't be done. Make it two hundred and fifty."

After some haggling, a bargain was made for two hundred and twenty. Then Hindhaugh went further: "I want one hundred and ten down before we start, and the balance before you take an ounce of tobacco out of us."

This was settled; the merchant bowed, and the skipper went away still keeping his hand on the revolver. Every cranny in the walls seemed fit to hide a murderer—seemed made for nothing else; and Hindhaugh thought what a fool he must have been to venture under that foul arch.

On getting aboard, the captain sent for his brother, who sailed as mate with him. He said, "Now, Jack, I'm going to run some risk. You take this pistol, and get her oiled and put right. When you see three feluccas coming alongside, get all the chaps on deck—the *Dora*'s crew as well as ours." (Hindhaugh was taking home a shipwrecked crew, and he was very grateful just then for that accession of force.) "Whack on everything you know, and get the bales up sharp. Tell the engineers to stand by for driving her, and leave the rest to me. If we're nailed we'll be detained, and I don't know what may happen so you'll have to look slippy."

Jack replied, "All right, sir!" Quarter-deck manners were punctiliously observed by one of the brothers.

The shadows fell low, and the crown of the Rock grew dim. The creeping wind stole over the Pearl Rock, and set the sinister ripple dancing; the bugles sang mysteriously through the gloom, and the mystery of the night was in the air. The *Jenny Jones* stole quietly toward the broad sheet of water where the vessels of the Fleet heaved up their shadowy bulk above the lapping flood. All the English sailors were stripped to the shirt, and a low hum of excited talk came from amidships. Suddenly the raking yard of a felucca started out from amid the haze; then came another, and another. A sailor slipped a cork fender over the side, and there was a muffled bump and a slight scrape. Jack, the mate, whispered, "Now, you cripples!" and a brief scene of wild hurry and violent labour ensued. Bale after bale was

whisked aboard; the Englishmen worked as only English sailors can, and the Scorpions excelled themselves under the influence of fear and black wine. When the last bale was up, Hindhaugh said to the man who first boarded him, "Who's got the money?"

"Me, Capeetan. All right. Honest man myself. You'se been have every dollar."

"Well then, it's neck or nothing. We have half an hour to clear out into the Gut. Come below, and shell out."

The Scorpion counted out one hundred pounds in gold, and then asked, "That be enough? Other money all right other end."

"Deuce a bit! Down with the other ten or I sliver you."

The Scorpion did not know what "sliver" meant, but the gleam of the skipper's cold eye was enough for him. He paid up and went on deck.

Hindhaugh had just said to the engineer, "Now, rive the soul out of her," when a low, panting sound was heard, and a white shape appeared gliding over the water. The captain had let the feluccas go, and the *Jenny Jones* was moving. He waved for the mate. "It's all up. Here's a mess. You must go home overland; suppose you swim ashore. Steady the men down."

Jack performed one or two steps of a dance, and placed his finger against his nose. He rather enjoyed a scrape, did this frivolous chief officer. The white shape came nearer, and a sharp whistle sounded. Hindhaugh had known well enough that it was a steam-launch that made the panting noise, and he got ready for the worst. The launch drew right across the bows of the steamer, and then the throbbing of the little engines ceased. Again the whistle sounded; the launch gave a bound forward; then she struck away into the darkness, and Hindhaugh drew a long breath.

In an instant every possible ounce of steam was put on, and the *Jenny Jones* went away at eleven knots toward the Gut. All night long the firemen were kept hard at it, and before morning the Rock was far astern of the driving steamboat.

Three of the Scorpions had stayed aboard, and Captain Hindhaugh noticed that they carried their knives. He noticed, too, that the cringing manner which the fellows had shown before the Rock was cleared had given place to a sort of subdued swagger.

About noon the engines were slowed down almost to nothing, and the

Jenny Jones crept gently on toward the shore. By four o'clock the vessel was well into Portuguese waters, and Hindhaugh was prepared to defy any quantity of Spanish coast-guards. When the sun had dipped low the Scorpion-in-chief came aft, and pointed mysteriously to the northeast.

"You'se been look where I point myself. Feluccas! You'se follow them in and drop anchor."

Hindhaugh smiled. "Do you think you're talking to a fool? Come you below there, and let me have that other money sharp."

"Ah, Capeetan, wait till agent's man come with felucca. I'se been have no money myself."

Hindhaugh was not a person to be trifled with. He quietly took out his revolver. "Now, do you see that pretty thing? First shot for you. Look at that block forrad, and see how much chance you'll have if I fire at you." The pop of the revolver sounded, and then Hindhaugh went forward, pulling the Scorpion with him. "Do you see that hole you image? How would you like if that was your gizzard? Now, no games, my joker."

The Scorpion begged for time, and Hindhaugh was so sure of his man that he made no further objection. He had another conference with Jack, and, to that worthy man's great delight, he expressed certain forebodings.

"We're going to have a fight over this job," said the skipper. "I'm dead sure of it. Go down and load the two muskets, and give them to the safest men. When the lighters *do* come, borrow the fireman's iron rods. I've lent the steward my bowie that I got at Charleston, and you can try and hold that old bulldog straight. We mustn't show the least sign of funking."

Then Hindhaugh and his brother called for tea, and fed solidly.

The Scorpion whispered down the companion, "They'se been com'," and the captain went on deck. Two large felucca-rigged lighters hove up slowly through the dusk, and the chief Scorpion's signal was answered. Hindhaugh saw both lighters draw near, he felt the usual scraping bump, and then he heard a sudden thunder of many feet. The second mate sung out, "Here's half a hundred of these devils, sir. They're all armed to the teeth." And sure enough, a set of ferocious-looking rapscallions had boarded the steamer. They looked like low-class Irishmen browned with walnut-juice. Each man had a heavy

array of pistols in his sash, and all of them carried ugly knives. The Scorpion waved to the gang, and they arranged themselves around the pile of bales that stuck out through the after-hatch. Hindhaugh had fully discounted all the chances, and had made up his mind to one thing: he wouldn't be "done."

The Scorpion imperiously observed. "Come below, Capeetan," and Hindhaugh went. Then the defiant native of the Rock put his back against the cabin door, heaved out his chest in a manly way, and said, "Now, Capeetan, you no have more money. You speak much, and I'se been get your throat cut myself."

"You've got no money?"

"No; not a damn dollar."

"You won't keep to your bargain?"

"No; you come 'shore for your money if you want him."

Hindhaugh made up his mind in a flash. In spite of his habit of wearing a frock-coat and tall hat, he was more than half a pirate, and he would have ruffled it, like his red-bearded ancestors, had fighting been still the usual employment of Norsemen. He marked his man's throat, and saw that the insolent hands could not get at a knife quickly. Then he sprang at the Scorpion, gripped him by the windpipe, and swung him down. The fellow gurgled, but he couldn't cry out. Hindhaugh called the steward, and that functionary came out of his den with the long bowie. "Sit on him," said the captain. "If he stirs cut his throat. Now, you, if you move a finger you're done." The steward straddled across the Scorpion, and held the knife up in a sarcastic way.

Hindhaugh went swiftly on deck, and stepped right among the jabbering Spaniards. He smiled as though nothing had happened, but when he saw one man lay hold of a bale he pulled him back. "Tell them I'll shoot the first man that tries to lift a bale till I'm ready."

This message brought on a torrent of talk, which gave the captain time. He whispered to Jack, "Sneak you round through the engine-room. That lighter's made fast forrad; the second one's fast here. Get a hatchet from the carpenter, and set him alongside of the second rope. When I whistle twice, both of you nick the ropes, and we'll jink these swindling swine." The engineer also received orders to go full speed ahead on the instant that the whistle sounded.

Hindhaugh kept up his air of good-humour, although the full sense of the risk he ran was in his mind. His threat of shooting had made the

Spaniards suspicious, although they were used to big talk of the kind. One peep into the cabin would have brought on a collision, and although the Englishmen might have fought, there was nothing to gain by a fight. Everything depended on swiftness of action, and Hindhaugh determined grimly that if rapidity could do anything he would teach the "furriners" a lesson for trying to swindle him.

He said, very politely, "We're all ready now. You get your men aboard the lighters, and we'll soon rush your cargo over the side." This was transmitted to the smugglers, and immediately they swarmed aboard their own boats. They had rather expected a quarrel, and this pacific solution pleased them. As Jack afterward said, "They blethered like a lot o' wild geese."

All the foreigners were gone but three. Hindhaugh stepped quietly up to the interpreter, and said, very low, "I'm covering you with my revolver from inside my pocket. Don't you stir. Is that other money going to be paid?"

The interpreter had been innocent of all knowledge of the wild work in the cabin. He stammered, "I thought by your way it was all right. Where's our man?"

"I've got him safe enough. Ask those fellows in the lighters if any of them can pay the freight for the job. If you tell them to fire they may miss me, and I can't miss you."

No one, not even the consignee's man, had any money; the smugglers meant to trick the Revenue, and the English captain as well. Hindhaugh whistled, and then roared out, "Lie down, all of you! Ram her ahead!" The hatchets went crack, crack; the steamer shuddered and plunged forward; and the lighters bumped swiftly astern.

"Over the side, you animals, or I'll take you out to sea and drown you."

The three Spaniards rushed to the side, and took flying leaps into the lighters. Hindhaugh stooped low and ran to the companion. "Let that beggar up," he shouted. The Scorpion scuttled on deck. "Now, mister, I'll let you see if you'll take me in. Over you go. Over the stern with you, and mind the propeller doesn't carve you." Two shots were fired, but they went wild. The Scorpion saw the whole situation; he poised for a second on the rail, and then jumped for it, and Hindhaugh laughed loudly as his enemy came up blowing. Jack performed

a triumphal war-dance on the steamer's bridge, and the *Jenny Jones* was soon far out of pistol range.

All that night Captain Hindhaugh did not sleep a wink. He was quite persuaded that he had acted the part of an exemplary Briton. What is the use of belonging to the ruling race if a mere foreigner is to do as he likes with you? But the adventurous skipper had landed himself in a pretty mess, and the full extent of his entanglement grew on him every minute. At twelve o'clock, when the watch was relieved, Jack came aft in a state of exultation that words cannot describe. He chuckled out, "Well, sir, we've made our fortunes this time." Hindhaugh damped his spirits by saying, slowly, "Not too fast; that 'baccy's got to go overboard, my boy." Jack's mental processes became confused. He had been measuring the cubic contents of the smuggled goods, and the thought of wasting such a gift of the gods fairly stunned him. Had it been cotton, his imagination would not have been touched. But 'baccy! and overboard! It was too much, and he groaned. He was ready with expedients at once.

"Why not run it to Holland?"

"Can't be done; where's our bill of lading?"

"Make up one yourself; you have plenty of forms."

"And suppose the luck goes the wrong way. What's to happen to me—and to you too for that matter?"

"Run to a tobacco port, and warehouse the stuff in your own name."

"We're not bound for a tobacco port. What's to be done about the cargo of ore that we are carrying? No, John; the whole five thousand pounds must go over the side."

Next morning broke joyously. The sea looked merry with miles of brisk foam, and the little Portuguese schooners flew like butterflies hither and thither. Every cloud of spray plucked from the dancing crests flashed like white fire under the clear sun. It was one of the mornings when one cannot speak for gladness. But Hindhaugh's thoughts were fixed on material things. The rich bales lay there, and their presence affected him like a sarcasm. The men were called aft, and the shovels used for trimming grain were brought up. Then the captain said, "Now each of you take a pound or two of this tobacco, and then break the bales and shovel the rest overboard." The precious packages were burst, and the sight of the beautiful leaf, the richness of the tender aroma, affected the sailors with remorse. It was like offer-

ing up a sacrifice. But the captain's orders were definite; so until near noon the shovels were plied smartly, and one hundredweight after another of admirable tobacco drifted away on the careless sea.

Hindhaugh watched grimly until at last his emotions overcame him. He growled, "Confound it, I can't do it! Belay there, men; I'll have another think over this job." And think he did, with businesslike solemnity, all day long. He saw that he might make a small fortune by risking his liberty, and the curious morality of the British sailor prevented him from seeing shades of right or wrong where contraband business was concerned. Had you told him that the tobacco was stolen, he would have pitched you overboard; he felt his morality to be unimpeachable; it was only the question of expediency that troubled him. For three days it was almost unsafe to go near him, so intently did he ponder and plan. On the fifth day he had worked his way through his perplexities, and was ready with a plan. A pilot cutter came in sight, and Hindhaugh signalled her. The pilot's boat was rowed alongside, and the bronzed and dignified chief swaggered up to the captain with much cordiality. No one is so cordial as a pilot who has secured a good ship. The two men exchanged news, and gradually slid into desultory talk. Suddenly Hindhaugh said, "Are you game for a bit of work? Do you ever *do* anything?"

The pilot was virtuously agitated. He drew himself up, and, taking care that the mate should hear, answered, "Me! Not for the wurrrld, Cap'n. I've got a wife and children, sir."

"All right, Pilot, never mind; come down and have some tea."

Then Hindhaugh gradually drew his man out, until the pilot was absolutely confidential. The captain knew by the very excess of purity expressed in the pilot's first answer that he was not dealing with a simpleton; but he carefully kept away from the main subject which was in his (and the pilot's) mind. At last the man leaned over and gave a masonic sign. "What was that job you was speaking about, Cap'n? We're near home now, you know. Better not go too near."

Hindhaugh played a large card. He smiled carelessly. "Fact is, I've just told the fellows to shy the stuff overboard; I shall risk no more."

"Mercy me, Cap'n! You're mad. How did I know who you were? I see all about it now, but I did not know what game you might have on with me. I'm in it, you know, if the dimes is right!"

"How?"

"Why, if the job's big enough. You stand off for a day; go down to the Sleeve, and hang round, and I'll find you a customer."

"If you do, I pay you three hundred pound as soon as his money's down."

"Done, then. My boat's not gone far. Whistle her, and I'll go slap for Bristol. Never you mind for a day or two. How's your coals?"

"They're all right. You scoot now, and fetch your man over this way. I'll go half-speed to the sou'west for twelve hours, another twelve hours half-speed back. You'll find us."

In thirty-six hours the pilot cutter came back, and a Hebrew gentleman boarded the *Jenny Jones* from her. After a long inspection, the visitor said, "Now look here, I must have a hundred per cent. margin out of this. What's your figure?"

"Two thousand five hundred."

"Won't do. Say two thousand, and you pay the jackal out of that."

"Done. And how do you manage?"

"I'll split the lot up among three trawlers. You wait off, and give the jackal an extra fifty for bringing the boats down. I risk the rest."

Another night passed, and the dawn was breaking coldly when the dirty sails of the trawlers came in sight. Ship after ship had hailed Hindhaugh, and offered to tow him if anything had happened to his engines. He knew he would be reported as lying off apparently disabled, and he was in a feverish state of excitement. The Hebrew speculator watched the last bale down the side, and then handed over the money, had a glass of brandy with the pilot, and departed—whither Hindhaugh neither knew nor cared. The *Jenny Jones* ran for her port. She had just slowed down, and the great waves of smoke from the town were pouring over her, when two large boats, heavily laden with men, came off to her. The men swarmed up the side, and the officer in command shouted, "Bring up the pickaxes, and go to work!" The hatches were pulled off before the steamer had taken up her moorings, and the men went violently to work among the ore. Hindhaugh looked innocent, and inquired, "What's all this about, officer?"

"Fact is, Captain, we've got a telegram from Gibraltar to say you have contraband on board. You may save all trouble if you make a clean breast."

"Contraband! Who told you that?"

"Oh, we should have known without the wire. That gentleman on the quay there came overland, and he put us up to you."

Hindhaugh looked ashore, and saw a dark face that he knew well. He whistled and smiled. Then he said to the officer, "You may just as well stop those poor beggars from blistering their hands. You won't find anything here except what the men have in the forecastle. You're done this journey fairly. Come away down and liquor, and I'll tell you all about it." Then Hindhaugh gave an artistic account of the whole transaction, and put the matter in such a light that the custom-house officer cordially congratulated him on having escaped without a slit weasand.

The *Jenny Jones* went back to Gibraltar, and Captain Hindhaugh was very careful never to go ashore without a companion. One day he was passing a chandler's shop when a sunken glitter of dark eyes met him. His old acquaintance, the chief Scorpion, was looking stilettos and poison at him. But Hindhaugh went by in his big, burly way, and contented himself with setting on three watchmen every night during his stay. To this day he is pleased with himself for having given the foreigners a lesson in the elements of morality, and he does not fear their knives one whit.

The Attack on the Mill

BY ÉMILE ZOLA

(*1840-1902*)

It was high holiday at Father Merlier's mill on that pleasant summer afternoon. Three tables had been brought out into the garden and placed end to end in the shadow of the great elm, and now they were awaiting the arrival of the guests. It was known throughout the length and breadth of the land that that day was to witness the betrothal of old Merlier's daughter, Françoise, to Dominique, a young man who was said to be not overfond of work, but whom never a woman for three leagues of the country around could look at without sparkling eyes, such a well-favoured young fellow was he.

That mill of Father Merlier's was truly a very pleasant spot. It was situated right in the heart of Rocreuse, at the place where the main road makes a sharp bend. The village has but a single street, bordered on either side by a row of low, white cottages; but just there where the road curves, there are broad stretches of meadow-land, and huge trees, which follow the course of the Morelle, cover the low grounds of the valley with a most delicious shade. All Lorraine has no more charming bit of nature to show. To right and left dense forests, great monarchs of the wood, centuries old, rise from the gentle slopes and fill the horizon with a sea of verdure, while away towards the south extends the plain, of wondrous fertility, and checkered almost to infinity with its small enclosures, divided off from one another by their live hedges. But what makes the crowning glory of Rocreuse is the coolness of this verdurous nook, even in the hottest days of July and August. The Morelle comes down from the woods of Gagny, and it would seem as if it gathered to itself on the way all the delicious freshness of the foliage beneath which it glides for many a league; it brings down with it the murmuring sounds, the glacial, solemn shadows of the forest. And that is not the only source of coolness; there are run-

ning waters of all kinds singing among the copses; one cannot take a step without coming on a gushing spring, and as he makes his way along the narrow paths, he seems to be treading above subterranean lakes that seek the air and sunshine through the moss above and profit by every smallest crevice, at the roots of trees or among the chinks and crannies of the rocks, to burst forth in fountains of crystalline clearness. So numerous and so loud are the whispering voices of these streams that they silence the song of the bullfinches. It is as if one were in an enchanted park.

The meadows below are never athirst. The shadows beneath the gigantic chestnut trees are of inky blackness, and along the edges of the fields long rows of poplar stand like walls of rustling foliage. There is a double avenue of huge plane trees ascending across the fields towards the ancient castle of Gagny, now gone to rack and ruin. In this region, where drought is never known, vegetation of all kinds is wonderfully rank; it is like a flower garden down there in the low ground between those two wooded hills, a natural garden, where the lawns are broad meadows and the giant trees represent colossal beds. When the noonday sun pours down his scorching rays the shadows lie blue upon the ground, the glowing vegetation slumbers in the heat, while every now and then a breath of icy coldness passes under the foliage.

Such was the spot where Father Merlier's mill enlivened with its cheerful clack nature run riot. The building itself, constructed of wood and plaster, looked as if it might be coeval with our planet. Its foundations were in part washed by the Morelle, which here expands into a clear pool. A dam, a few feet in height, afforded sufficient head of water to drive the old wheel, which creaked and groaned as it revolved, with the asthmatic wheezing of a faithful servant who has grown old in her place. Whenever Father Merlier was advised to change it, he would shake his head and say that like as not a young wheel would be lazier and not so well acquainted with its duties, and then he would set to work and patch up the old one with anything that came to hand, old hogshead-staves, bits of rusty iron, zinc or lead. The old wheel only seemed the gayer for it, with its odd profile, all plumed and feathered with tufts of moss and grass, and when the water poured over it in a silver tide its gaunt black skeleton was decked out with a gorgeous display of pearls and diamonds.

That portion of the mill which was bathed by the Morelle had some-

thing of the look of a barbaric arch that had been dropped down there by chance. A good half of the structure was built on piles; the water came in under the floor, and there were deep holes, famous throughout the whole country for the eels and huge crawfish that were to be caught there. Below the fall the pool was as clear as a mirror, and when it was not clouded by foam from the wheel one could see troops of great fish swimming about in it with the slow, majestic movements of a squadron. There was a broken stairway leading down to the stream, near a stake to which a boat was fastened, and over the wheel was a gallery of wood. Such windows as there were were arranged without any attempt at order. The whole was a quaint conglomeration of nooks and corners, bits of wall, additions made here and there as afterthoughts, beams and roofs, that gave the mill the aspect of an old dismantled citadel; but ivy and all sorts of creeping plants had grown luxuriantly, and kindly covered up such crevices as were too unsightly, casting a mantle of green over the old dwelling. Young ladies who passed that way used to stop and sketch Father Merlier's mill in their albums.

The side of the house that faced the road was less irregular. A gateway in stone afforded access to the principal courtyard, on the right and left hand of which were sheds and stables. Beside a well stood an immense elm that threw its shade over half the court. At the further end, opposite the gate, stood the house surmounted by a dovecote, the four windows of its first floor in a symmetrical line. The only vanity that Father Merlier ever allowed himself was to paint this façade every ten years. It had just been freshly painted at the time of our story, and dazzled the eyes of all the village when the sun lighted it up in the middle of the day.

For twenty years had Father Merlier been mayor of Rocreuse. He was held in great consideration on account of his fortune; he was supposed to be worth something like eighty thousand francs, the result of patient saving. When he married Madeleine Guillard, who brought him the mill as her dowry, his entire capital lay in his two strong arms, but Madeleine had never repented of her choice, so manfully had he conducted their joint affairs. Now his wife was dead, and he was left a widower with his daughter Françoise. Doubtless he might have set himself down to take his rest, and suffered the old mill-wheel to sleep among its moss, but he would have found idleness too irksome

and the house would have seemed dead to him. He kept on working still for the pleasure of it. In those days Father Merlier was a tall old man, with a long, silent face, on which a laugh was never seen, but beneath which there lay, none the less, a large fund of good-humour. He had been elected mayor on account of his money, and also for the impressive air that he knew how to assume when it devolved on him to marry a couple.

Françoise Merlier had just completed her eighteenth year. She was small, and for that reason was not accounted one of the beauties of the country. Until she reached the age of fifteen she had been even homely: the good folks of Rocreuse could not see how it was that the daughter of Father and Mother Merlier, such a hale, vigorous couple, had such a hard time of it in getting her growth. When she was fifteen, however, though still remaining delicate, a change came over her and she took on the prettiest little face imaginable. She had black hair, black eyes, and was red as a rose withal; her mouth was always smiling, there were delicious dimples in her cheeks, and a crown of sunshine seemed to be ever resting on her fair, candid forehead. Although small, as girls went in that region, she was far from being thin; she might not have been able to raise a sack of wheat to her shoulder, but she became quite plump as she grew older, and gave promise of becoming eventually as well rounded and appetizing as a partridge. Her father's habits of taciturnity had made her reflective while yet a young girl; if she always had a smile on her lips it was in order to give pleasure to others. Her natural disposition was serious.

As was no more than to be expected, she had every young man in the countryside at her heels as a suitor, more, even, for her money than her attractiveness, and she had made a choice at last, a choice that had been the talk and scandal of the entire neighbourhood.

On the other side of the Morelle lived a strapping young fellow who went by the name of Dominique Penquer. He was not to the manner born; ten years previously he had come to Rocreuse from Belgium to receive the inheritance of an uncle who had owned a small property on the very borders of the forest of Gagny, just facing the mill and distant from it only a few musket-shots. His object in coming was to sell the property, so he said, and return to his own home again; but he must have found the land to his liking, for he made no move to go away. He was seen cultivating his bit of field and gathering the few

vegetables that afforded him an existence. He fished, he hunted; more than once he was near coming in contact with the law through the intervention of the keepers. This independent way of living, of which the peasants could not very clearly see the resources, had in the end given him a bad name. He was vaguely looked on as nothing better than a poacher. At all events he was lazy, for he was frequently found sleeping in the grass at hours when he should have been at work. Then, too, the hut in which he lived, in the shade of the last trees of the forest, did not seem like the abode of an honest young man; the old women would not have been surprised at any time to hear that he was on friendly terms with the wolves in the ruins of Gagny. Still, the young girls would now and then venture to stand up for him, for he was altogether a splendid specimen of manhood, was this individual of doubtful antecedents, tall and straight as a young poplar, with a milk-white skin and ruddy hair and mustaches that seemed to be of gold when the sun shone on them. Now, one fine morning it came to pass that Françoise told Father Merlier that she loved Dominique, and that never would she consent to marry any other young man.

It may be imagined what a knockdown blow it was that Father Merlier received that day! As was his wont, he said never a word; his countenance wore its usual reflective look, only the fun that used to bubble up from within no longer shone in his eyes. Françoise, too, was very serious, and for a week father and daughter scarcely spoke to each other. What troubled Father Merlier was to know how that rascal of a poacher had succeeded in bewitching his daughter. Dominique had never shown himself at the mill. The miller played the spy a little, and was rewarded by catching sight of the gallant, on the other side of the Morelle, lying among the grass and pretending to be asleep. Françoise could see him from her chamber window. The thing was clear enough; they had been making sheep's-eyes at each other over the old mill-wheel, and so had fallen in love.

A week slipped by; Françoise became more and more serious. Father Merlier still continued to say nothing. Then, one evening, of his own accord, he brought Dominique to the house, without a word. Françoise was just setting the table. She made no demonstration of surprise; all she did was to add another plate, but her laugh had come back to her, and the little dimples appeared again upon her cheeks.

Father Merlier had gone that morning to look for Dominique at his hut on the edge of the forest, and there the two men had had a conference, with closed doors and windows, that lasted three hours. No one ever knew what they said to each other; the only thing certain is that when Father Merlier left the hut he already treated Dominique as a son. Doubtless the old man had discovered that he whom he had gone to visit was a worthy young fellow, even though he did lie in the grass to gain the love of young girls.

All Rocreuse was up in arms. The women gathered at their doors and could not find words strong enough to characterize Father Merlier's folly in thus receiving a ne'er-do-well into his family. He let them talk. Perhaps he thought of his own marriage. Neither had he possessed a penny to his name at the time he married Madeleine and her mill, and yet that had not prevented him from being a good husband to her. Moreover, Dominique put an end to their tittle-tattle by setting to work in such strenuous fashion that all the countryside was amazed. It so happened just then that the boy of the mill drew an unlucky number and had to go for a soldier, and Dominique would not hear of their engaging another. He lifted sacks, drove the cart, wrestled with the old wheel when it took an obstinate fit and refused to turn, and all so pluckily and cheerfully that people came from far and near merely for the pleasure of seeing him. Father Merlier laughed his silent laugh. He was highly elated that he had read the youngster aright. There is nothing like love to hearten up young men.

In the midst of all that laborious toil Françoise and Dominique fairly worshipped each other. They had not much to say, but their tender smiles conveyed a world of meaning. Father Merlier had not said a word thus far on the subject of their marriage, and they had both respected his silence, waiting until the old man should see fit to give expression to his will. At last, one day, toward the middle of July, he had three tables laid on the courtyard, in the shade of the big elm, and had invited his friends of Rocreuse to come that afternoon and drink a glass of wine with him. When the courtyard was filled with people, and everyone there had a full glass in his hand, Father Merlier raised his own high above his head and said:

"I have the pleasure of announcing to you that Françoise and this lad will be married in a month from now, on St. Louis' fête-day."

Then there was a universal touching of glasses, attended by a tremen-

dous uproar; everyone was laughing. But Father Merlier, raising his voice above the din, again spoke:

"Dominique, kiss your wife that is to be. It is no more than customary."

And they kissed, very red in the face, both of them, while the company laughed louder still. It was a regular fête; they emptied a small cask. Then, when only the intimate friends of the house remained, conversation went on in a calmer strain. Night had fallen, a starlit night, and very clear; Dominique and Françoise sat on a bench, side by side, and said nothing. An old peasant spoke of the war that the Emperor had declared against Prussia. All the lads of the village were already gone off to the army. Troops had passed through the place only the night before. There were going to be hard knocks.

"Bah!" said Father Merlier, with the selfishness of a man who is quite happy, "Dominique is a foreigner; he won't have to go—and if the Prussians come this way, he will be here to defend his wife."

The idea of the Prussians coming there seemed to the company an exceedingly good joke. The army would give them one good conscientious thrashing, and the affair would be quickly ended.

"I have seen them before, I have seen them before," the old peasant repeated, in a low voice.

There was silence for a little, then they all touched glasses once again. Françoise and Dominique had heard nothing; they had managed to clasp hands behind the bench in such a way as not to be seen by the others, and this condition of affairs seemed so beatific to them that they sat there mute, their gaze lost in the darkness of the night.

What a magnificent, balmy night! The village lay slumbering on either side of the white road as peacefully as a little child. The deep silence was undisturbed save by the occasional crow of a cock in some distant barnyard acting on a mistaken impression that dawn was at hand. Perfumed breaths of air, like long-drawn sighs, came down from the great woods that lay around and above, sweeping softly over the roofs, as if caressing them. The meadows, with their black intensity of shadow, took on a dim, mysterious majesty of their own, while all the springs, all the brooks and watercourses that gurgled in the darkness, might have been taken for the cool and rhythmical breathing of the sleeping country. Every now and then the old dozing mill-wheel seemed to be dreaming like a watchdog that barks uneasily in his slum-

ber; it creaked, it talked to itself, rocked by the fall of the Morelle, whose current gave forth the deep, sustained music of an organ-pipe. Never was there a more charming or happier nook, never did a deeper peace come down to cover it.

II

One month later, to a day, on the eve of the fête of Saint Louis, Rocreuse was in a state of alarm and dismay. The Prussians had beaten the Emperor, and were advancing on the village by forced marches. For a week past, people passing along the road had brought tidings of the enemy: "They are at Lormières, they are at Nouvelles"; and by dint of hearing so many stories of the rapidity of their advance, Rocreuse woke up every morning in the full expectation of seeing them swarming down out of Gagny wood. They did not come, however, and that only served to make the affright the greater. They would certainly fall upon the village in the night-time, and put every soul to the sword.

There had been an alarm the night before, a little before daybreak. The inhabitants had been aroused by a great noise of men tramping upon the road. The women were already throwing themselves upon their knees and making the sign of the cross, when someone to whom it happily occurred to peep through a half-opened window, caught sight of red trousers. It was a French detachment. The captain had forthwith asked for the mayor, and, after a long conversation with Father Merlier, had remained at the mill.

The sun shone bright and clear that morning, giving promise of a warm day. There was a golden light floating over the woodland, while in the low grounds white mists were rising from the meadows. The pretty village, so neat and trim, awoke in the cool dawning, and the country, with its streams and its fountains, was as gracious as a freshly plucked bouquet. But the beauty of the day brought gladness to the face of no one; the villagers had watched the captain, and seen him circle round and round the old mill, examine the adjacent houses, then pass to the other bank of the Morelle, and from thence scan the country with a field glass; Father Merlier, who accompanied him, appeared to be giving explanations. After that the captain had posted some of his men behind walls, behind trees or in hollows. The main body of the detachment had encamped in the courtyard by the mill. So there was going to be a fight, then? And when Father Merlier returned they

questioned him. He spoke no word, but slowly and sorrowfully nodded his head. Yes, there was going to be a fight.

Françoise and Dominique were there in the courtyard, watching him. He finally took his pipe from his lips and gave utterance to these few words:

"Ah! my poor children, I shall not be able to marry you today!"

Dominique, with lips tight set and an angry frown upon his forehead, raised himself on tiptoe from time to time and stood with eyes bent on Gagny wood, as if he would have been glad to see the Prussians appear and end the suspense they were in. Françoise, whose face was grave and very pale, was constantly passing back and forth, supplying the needs of the soldiers. They were preparing their soup in a corner of the courtyard, joking and chaffing one another while awaiting their meal.

The captain appeared to be highly pleased. He had visited the chambers and the great hall of the mill that looked out on the stream. Now, seated beside the well, he was conversing with Father Merlier.

"You have a regular fortress here," he was saying.

"We shall have no trouble in holding it until evening. The bandits are late; they ought to be here by this time."

The miller looked very grave. He saw his beloved mill going up in flame and smoke, but uttered no word of remonstrance or complaint, considering that it would be useless. He only opened his mouth to say:

"You ought to take steps to hide the boat; there is a hole behind the wheel fitted to hold it. Perhaps you may find it of use to you."

The captain gave an order to one of his men. This captain was a tall, fine-looking man of about forty, with an agreeable expression of countenance. The sight of Dominique and Françoise seemed to afford him much pleasure; he watched them as if he had forgotten all about the approaching conflict. He followed Françoise with his eyes as she moved about the courtyard, and his manner showed clearly enough that he thought her charming. Then, turning to Dominique:

"You are not with the army, I see, my boy?" he abruptly asked.

"I am a foreigner," the young man replied.

The captain did not seem particularly pleased with the answer; he winked his eyes and smiled. Françoise was doubtless a more agreeable companion than a musket would have been. Dominique, noticing his smile, made haste to add:

"I am a foreigner, but I can lodge a rifle bullet in an apple at five hundred yards. See, there's my rifle behind you."

"You may find use for it," the captain drily answered.

Françoise had drawn near; she was trembling a little, and Dominique, regardless of the bystanders, took and held firmly clasped in his own the two hands that she held forth to him, as if committing herself to his protection. The captain smiled again, but said nothing more. He remained seated, his sword between his legs, his eyes fixed on space, apparently lost in dreamy reverie.

It was ten o'clock. The heat was already oppressive. A deep silence prevailed. The soldiers had sat down in the shade of the sheds in the courtyard and begun to eat their soup. Not a sound came from the village, where the inhabitants had all barricaded their houses, doors and windows. A dog, abandoned by his master, howled mournfully upon the road. From the woods and the near-by meadows, that lay fainting in the heat, came a long-drawn, whispering, soughing sound, produced by the union of what wandering breaths of air there were. A cuckoo called Then the silence became still.

And all at once, upon that lazy, sleepy air, a shot rang out. The captain rose quickly to his feet, the soldiers left their half-emptied plates. In a few seconds all were at their posts; the mill was occupied from top to bottom. And yet the captain, who had gone out through the gate, saw nothing: to right and left the road stretched away, desolate and blindingly white in the fierce sunshine. A second report was heard, and still nothing to be seen, not even so much as a shadow; but just as he was turning to re-enter he chanced to look over toward Gagny and there beheld a little puff of smoke floating away on the tranquil air, like thistledown. The deep peace of the forest was apparently unbroken.

"The rascals have occupied the wood," the officer murmured. "They know we are here."

Then the firing went on, and became more and more continuous between the French soldiers posted about the mill and the Prussians concealed among the trees. The bullets whistled over the Morelle without doing any mischief on either side. The firing was irregular; every bush seemed to have its marksman, and nothing was to be seen save those bluish smoke wreaths that hung for a moment on the wind before they vanished. It lasted thus for nearly two hours. The officer

hummed a tune with a careless air. Françoise and Dominique, who remained in the courtyard, raised themselves to look out over a low wall. They were more particularly interested in a little soldier who had his post on the bank of the Morelle, behind the hull of an old boat; he would lie face downward on the ground, watch his chance, deliver his fire, then slip back into a ditch a few steps in his rear to reload, and his movements were so comical, he displayed such cunning and activity, that it was difficult for anyone watching him to refrain from smiling. He must have caught sight of a Prussian, for he rose quickly and brought his piece to the shoulder, but before he could discharge it he uttered a loud cry, whirled completely around in his tracks and fell backward into the ditch, where for an instant his legs moved convulsively, just as the claws of a fowl do when it is beheaded. The little soldier had received a bullet directly through his heart. It was the first casualty of the day. Françoise instinctively seized Dominique's hand, and held it tight in a convulsive grasp.

"Come away from there," said the captain. "The bullets reach us here."

As if to confirm his words a slight, sharp sound was heard up in the old elm, and the end of a branch came to the ground, turning over and over as it fell, but the two young people never stirred, riveted to the spot as they were by the interest of the spectacle. On the edge of the wood a Prussian had suddenly emerged from behind a tree, as an actor comes upon the stage from the wings, beating the air with his arms and falling over upon his back. And beyond that there was no movement; the two dead men appeared to be sleeping in the bright sunshine; there was not a soul to be seen in the fields on which the heat lay heavy. Even the sharp rattle of the musketry had ceased. Only the Morelle kept on whispering to itself with its low, musical murmur.

Father Merlier looked at the captain with an astonished air, as if to inquire whether that were the end of it.

"Here comes their attack," the officer murmured. "Look out for yourself! Don't stand there!"

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when a terrible discharge of musketry ensued. The great elm was riddled, its leaves came eddying down as thick as snow-flakes. Fortunately, the Prussians had aimed too high. Dominique dragged, almost carried, Françoise from the spot, while Father Merlier followed them, shouting:

"Get into the small cellar, the walls are thicker there."

But they paid no attention to him; they made their way to the main hall, where ten or a dozen soldiers were silently waiting, watching events outside through the chinks of the closed shutters. The captain was left alone in the courtyard, where he sheltered himself behind the low wall, while the furious fire was maintained uninterruptedly. The soldiers whom he had posted outside only yielded their ground inch by inch; they came crawling in, however, one after another, as the enemy dislodged them from their positions. Their instructions were to gain all the time they could, taking care not to show themselves, in order that the Prussians might remain in ignorance of the force they had opposed to them. Another hour passed, and as a sergeant came in, reporting that there were now only two or three men left outside, the officer took his watch from his pocket, murmuring:

"Half-past two. Come, we must hold out for four hours yet."

He caused the great gate of the courtyard to be tightly secured, and everything was made ready for an energetic defense. The Prussians were on the other side of the Morelle, consequently there was no reason to fear an assault at the moment. There was a bridge indeed, a mile and a quarter away, but they were probably unaware of its existence, and it was hardly to be supposed that they would attempt to cross the stream by fording. The officer, therefore, simply caused the road to be watched; the attack, when it came, was to be looked for from the direction of the fields. The firing had ceased again. The mill appeared to lie there in the sunlight, void of all life. Not a shutter was open, not a sound came from within. Gradually, however, the Prussians began to show themselves at the edge of Gagny wood. Heads were protruded here and there; they seemed to be mustering up their courage. Several of the soldiers within the mill brought up their pieces to an aim, but the captain shouted:

"No, no; not yet; wait. Let them come nearer."

They displayed a great deal of prudence in their advance, looking at the mill with a distrustful air; they seemed hardly to know what to make of the old structure, so lifeless and gloomy, with its curtain of ivy. Still they kept on advancing. When there were fifty of them or so in the open, directly opposite, the officer uttered one word:

"Now!"

A crashing, tearing discharge burst from the position, succeeded by

an irregular, dropping fire. Françoise, trembling violently, involuntarily raised her hands to her ears. Dominique, from his position behind the soldiers, peered out upon the field, and when the smoke drifted away a little, counted three Prussians extended on their backs in the middle of the meadow. The others had sought shelter among the willows and the poplars. And then commenced the siege.

For more than an hour the mill was riddled with bullets; they beat and rattled on its old walls like hail. The noise they made was plainly audible as they struck the stonework, were flattened and fell back into the water; they buried themselves in the woodwork with a dull thud. Occasionally a creaking sound would announce that the wheel had been hit. Within the building the soldiers husbanded their ammunition, firing only when they could see something to aim at. The captain kept consulting his watch every few minutes, and as a ball split one of the shutters in halves and then lodged in the ceiling:

"Four o'clock," he murmured. "We shall never be able to hold the position."

The old mill, in truth, was gradually going to pieces beneath that terrific fire. A shutter that had been perforated again and again, until it looked like a piece of lace, fell off its hinges into the water, and had to be replaced by a mattress. Every moment, almost, Father Merlier exposed himself to the fire in order to take account of the damage sustained by his poor wheel, every wound of which was like a bullet in his own heart. Its period of usefulness was ended this time for certain; he would never be able to patch it up again. Dominique had besought Françoise to retire to a place of safety, but she was determined to remain with him; she had taken a seat behind a great oaken clothespress, which afforded her protection. A ball struck the press, however, the sides of which gave out a dull hollow sound, whereupon Dominique stationed himself in front of Françoise. He had as yet taken no part in the firing, although he had his rifle in his hand; the soldiers occupied the whole breadth of the windows, so that he could not get near them. At every discharge the floor trembled.

"Look out! look out!" the captain suddenly shouted.

He had just descried a dark mass emerging from the wood. As soon as they gained the open they set up a telling platoon fire. It struck the mill like a tornado. Another shutter parted company, and the bullets came whistling in through the yawning aperture. Two soldiers

rolled upon the floor; one lay where he fell and never moved a limb; his comrades pushed him up against the wall because he was in their way. The other writhed and twisted, beseeching someone to end his agony, but no one had ears for the poor wretch; the bullets were still pouring in, and everyone was looking out for himself and searching for a loophole whence he might answer the enemy's fire. A third soldier was wounded; that one said not a word, but with staring, haggard eyes sank down beneath a table. Françoise, horror-stricken by the dreadful spectacle of the dead and dying men, mechanically pushed away her chair and seated herself on the floor, against the wall; it seemed to her that she would be smaller there and less exposed. In the meantime men had gone and secured all the mattresses in the house; the opening of the window was partially closed again. The hall was filled with *débris* of every description, broken weapons, dislocated furniture.

"Five o'clock," said the captain. "Stand fast, boys. They are going to make an attempt to pass the stream."

Just then Françoise gave a shriek. A bullet had struck the floor, and rebounding, grazed her forehead on the ricochet. Dominique looked at her, then went to the window and fired his first shot, and from that time kept on firing uninterruptedly. He kept on loading and discharging his piece mechanically, paying no attention to what was passing at his side, only pausing from time to time to cast a look at Françoise. He did not fire hurriedly or at random, moreover, but took deliberate aim. As the captain had predicted, the Prussians were skirting the belt of poplars and attempted the passage of the Morelle, but each time one of them showed himself he fell with one of Dominique's bullets in his brain. The captain, who was watching the performance, was amazed; he complimented the young man, telling him that he would like to have more marksmen of his skill. Dominique did not hear a word he said. A ball struck him in the shoulder, another raised a contusion on his arm. And still he kept on firing.

There were two more deaths. The mattresses were torn to shreds and no longer availed to stop the windows. The last volley that was poured in seemed as if it would carry away the mill bodily, so fierce it was. The position was no longer tenable. Still, the officer kept repeating:

"Stand fast! Another half-hour yet."

He was counting the minutes, one by one. He had promised his commanders that he would hold the enemy there until nightfall, and he would not budge a hair's-breadth before the moment that he had fixed on for his withdrawal. He maintained his pleasant air of good-humour, smiling at Françoise by way of reassuring her. He had picked up the musket of one of the dead soldiers and was firing away with the rest.

There were but four soldiers left in the room. The Prussians were showing themselves *en masse* on the other side of the Morelle, and it was evident that they might now pass the stream at any moment. A few moments more elapsed; the captain was as determined as ever, and would not give the order to retreat, when a sergeant came running into the room, saying:

"They are on the road; they are going to take us in rear."

The Prussians must have discovered the bridge. The captain drew out his watch again.

"Five minutes more," he said. "They won't be here within five minutes."

Then exactly at six o'clock he at last withdrew his men through a little postern that opened on a narrow lane, whence they threw themselves into the ditch, and in that way reached the forest of Sauval. The captain took leave of Father Merlier with much politeness, apologizing profusely for the trouble he had caused. He even added:

"Try to keep them occupied for a while. We shall return."

While this was occurring, Dominique had remained alone in the hall. He was still firing away, hearing nothing, conscious of nothing; his sole thought was to defend Françoise. The soldiers were all gone, and he had not the remotest idea of the fact; he aimed and brought down his man at every shot. All at once there was a great tumult. The Prussians had entered the courtyard from the rear. He fired his last shot, and they fell upon him with his weapon still smoking in his hand.

It required four men to hold him; the rest of them swarmed about him, vociferating like madmen in their horrible dialect. Françoise rushed forward to intercede with her prayers. They were on the point of killing him on the spot, but an officer came in and made them turn the prisoner over to him. After exchanging a few words in German

with his men he turned to Dominique and said to him roughly in very good French:

"You will be shot in two hours from now."

III

It was the standing regulation, laid down by the German staff, that every Frenchman not belonging to the regular army, taken with arms in his hands, should be shot. Even the *compagnies franches* were not recognized as belligerents. It was the intention of the Germans, in making such terrible examples of the peasants who attempted to defend their firesides, to prevent a rising *en masse,* which they greatly dreaded.

The officer, a tall, square man about fifty years old, subjected Dominique to a brief examination. Although he spoke French fluently, he was unmistakably Prussian in the stiffness of his manner.

"You are a native of this country?"

"No, I am a Belgian."

"Why did you take up arms? These are matters with which you have no concern."

Dominique made no reply. At this moment the officer caught sight of Françoise where she stood listening, very pale; her slight wound had marked her white forehead with a streak of red. He looked from one to the other of the young people and appeared to understand the situation: he merely added:

"You do not deny having fired on my men?"

"I fired as long as I was able to do so," Dominique quietly replied.

The admission was scarcely necessary, for he was black with powder, wet with sweat, and the blood from the wound in his shoulder had trickled down and stained his clothing.

"Very well," the officer repeated. "You will be shot two hours hence."

Françoise uttered no cry. She clasped her hands and raised them above her head in a gesture of mute despair. Her action was not lost upon the officer. Two soldiers had led Dominique away to an adjacent room, where their orders were to guard him and not lose sight of him. The girl had sunk upon a chair; her strength had failed her, her legs refused to support her; she was denied the relief of tears, it

seemed as if her emotion was strangling her. The officer continued to examine her attentively, and finally addressed her:

"Is that young man your brother?" he inquired.

She shook her head in negation. He was as rigid and unbending as ever, without the suspicion of a smile on his face. Then, after an interval of silence, he spoke again:

"Has he been living in the neighbourhood long?"

She answered yes, by another motion of the head.

"Then he must be well acquainted with the woods about here?"

This time she made a verbal answer. "Yes, sir," she said, looking at him with some astonishment.

He said nothing more, but turned on his heel, requesting that the mayor of the village should be brought before him. But Françoise had risen from her chair, a faint tinge of colour on her cheeks, believing that she had caught the significance of his questions, and with renewed hope she ran off to look for her father.

As soon as the firing had ceased Father Merlier had hurriedly descended by the wooden gallery to have a look at his wheel. He adored his daughter and had a strong feeling of affection for Dominique, his son-in-law who was to be; but his wheel also occupied a large space in his heart. Now that the two little ones, as he called them, had come safe and sound out of the fray, he thought of his other love, which must have suffered sorely, poor thing, and, bending over the great wooden skeleton, he was scrutinizing its wounds with a heart-broken air. Five of the buckets were reduced to splinters, the central framework was honeycombed. He was thrusting his fingers into the cavities that the bullets had made to see how deep they were and reflecting how he was ever to repair all that damage. When Françoise found him he was already plugging up the crevices with moss and such *débris* as he could lay his hands on.

"They are asking for you, father," said she.

And at last she wept as she told him what she had just heard. Father Merlier shook his head. It was not customary to shoot people like that. He would have to look into the matter. And he re-entered the mill with his usual placid, silent air. When the officer made his demand for supplies for his men, he answered that the people of Rocreuse were not accustomed to be ridden roughshod, and that nothing would be obtained from them through violence; he was willing to

assume all the responsibility, but only on condition that he was allowed to act independently. The officer at first appeared to take umbrage at this easy way of viewing matters, but finally gave way before the old man's brief and distinct representations. As the latter was leaving the room the other recalled to ask:

"Those woods opposite, what do you call them?"

"The woods of Sauval."

"And how far do they extend?"

The miller looked him straight in the face. "I do not know," he replied.

And he withdrew. An hour later the subvention in money and provisions that the officer had demanded was in the courtyard of the mill. Night was coming in; Françoise followed every movement of the soldier with an anxious eye. She never once left the vicinity of the room in which Dominique was imprisoned. About seven o'clock she had a harrowing emotion; she saw the officer enter the prisoner's apartment, and for a quarter of an hour heard their voices raised in violent discussion. The officer came to the door for a moment and gave an order in German which she did not understand, but when twelve men came and formed in the courtyard with shouldered muskets, she was seized with a fit of trembling and felt as if she should die. It was all over then; the execution was about to take place. The twelve men remained there ten minutes; Dominique's voice kept rising higher and higher in a tone of vehement denial. Finally the officer came out, closing the door with a vicious bang, and saying:

"Very well; think it over. I give you until tomorrow morning."

And he ordered the twelve men to break ranks by a motion of his hand. Françoise was stupefied. Father Merlier, who had continued to puff away at his pipe while watching the platoon with a simple, curious air, came and took her by the arm with fatherly gentleness. He led her to her chamber.

"Don't fret," he said to her; "try to get some sleep. Tomorrow it will be light, and we shall see more clearly."

He locked the door behind him as he left the room. It was a fixed principle with him that women are good for nothing, and that they spoil everything whenever they meddle in important matters. Françoise did not lie down, however; she remained a long time seated on her bed, listening to the various noises in the house. The German soldiers

quartered in the courtyard were singing and laughing; they must have kept up their eating and drinking until eleven o'clock, for the riot never ceased for an instant. Heavy footsteps resounded from time to time through the mill itself, doubtless the tramp of the guards as they were relieved. What had most interest for her were the sounds that she could catch in the room that lay directly under her own; several times she threw herself prone upon the floor and applied her ear to the boards. That room was the one in which they had locked up Dominique. He must have been pacing the apartment, for she could hear for a long time his regular, cadenced tread passing from the wall to the window and back again; then there was a deep silence; doubtless he had seated himself. The other sounds ceased too; everything was still. When it seemed to her that the house was sunk in slumber she raised her window as noiselessly as possible and leaned out.

Without, the night was serene and balmy. The slender crescent of the moon, which was just setting behind Sauval wood, cast a dim radiance over the landscape. The lengthening shadows of the great trees stretched far athwart the fields in bands of blackness, while in such spots as were unobscured the grass appeared of a tender green, soft as velvet. But Françoise did not stop to consider the mysterious charm of the night. She was scrutinizing the country and looking to see where the Germans had posted their sentinels. She could clearly distinguish their dark forms outlined along the course of the Morelle. There was only one stationed opposite the mill, on the far bank of the stream, by a willow whose branches dipped in the water. Françoise had an excellent view of him; he was a tall young man, standing quite motionless with face upturned toward the sky, with the meditative air of a shepherd.

When she had completed her careful inspection of localities she returned and took her former seat upon the bed. She remained there an hour, absorbed in deep thought. Then she listened again; there was not a breath to be heard in the house. She went again to the window and took another look outside, but one of the moon's horns was still hanging above the edge of the forest, and this circumstance doubtless appeared to her unpropitious, for she resumed her waiting. At last the moment seemed to have arrived; the night was now quite dark; she could no longer discern the sentinel opposite her; the landscape lay before her black as a sea of ink. She listened intently for a

moment, then formed her resolve. Close beside her window was an iron ladder made of bars set in the wall, which ascended from the mill-wheel to the granary at the top of the building, and had formerly served the miller as a means of inspecting certain portions of the gearing, but a change having been made in the machinery, the ladder had long since become lost to sight beneath the thick ivy that covered all that side of the mill.

Françoise bravely climbed over the balustrade of the little balcony in front of her window, grasped one of the iron bars and found herself suspended in space. She commenced the descent; her skirts were a great hindrance to her. Suddenly a stone became loosened from the wall and fell into the Morelle with a loud splash. She stopped, benumbed with fear, but reflection quickly told her that the waterfall, with its continuous roar, was sufficient to deaden any noise that she could make, and then she descended more boldly, putting aside the ivy with her foot, testing each round of her ladder. When she was on a level with the room that had been converted into a prison for her lover she stopped. An unforeseen difficulty came near depriving her of all her courage: the window of the room beneath was not situated directly under the window of her bedroom; there was a wide space between it and the ladder, and when she extended her hand it only encountered the naked wall.

Would she have to go back the way she came and leave her project unaccomplished? Her arms were growing very tired; the murmuring of the Morelle, far down below, was beginning to make her dizzy. Then she broke off bits of plaster from the wall and threw them against Dominique's window. He did not hear; perhaps he was asleep. Again she crumbled fragments from the wall, until the skin was peeled from her fingers. Her strength was exhausted, she felt that she was about to fall backward into the stream when at last Dominique softly raised his sash.

"It is I," she murmured. "Take me quick; I am about to fall." Leaning from the window he grasped her and drew her into the room, where she had a paroxysm of weeping, stifling her sobs in order that she might not be heard. Then, by a supreme effort of the will she overcame her emotion.

"Are you guarded?" she asked in a low voice.

Dominique, not yet recovered from his stupefaction at seeing her

here, made answer by simply pointing toward his door. There was sound of snoring audible on the outside; it was evident that the entinel had been overpowered by sleep and had thrown himself upon he floor close against the door in such a way that it could not be pened without arousing him.

"You must fly," she continued earnestly. "I came here to bid ou fly and say farewell."

But he seemed not to hear her. He kept repeating:

"What, is it you, is it you? Oh, what a fright you gave me! You ight have killed yourself." He took her hands, he kissed them gain and again. "How I love you, Françoise! You are as courageous s you are good. The only thing I feared was that I might die with- ut seeing you again; but you are here, and now they may shoot me hen they will. Let me but have a quarter of an hour with you and I m ready."

He had gradually drawn her to him; her head was resting on his houlder. The peril that was so near at hand brought them closer o each other, and they forgot everything in that long embrace.

"Ah, Françoise!" Dominique went on in low, caressing tones, "to- ay is the fête of Saint Louis, our wedding day that we have been aiting for so long. Nothing has been able to keep us apart, for e are both here, faithful to our appointment, are we not? It is now ur wedding morning."

"Yes, yes," she repeated after him, "our wedding morning."

They shuddered as they exchanged a kiss. But suddenly she tore erself from his arms; the terrible reality arose before her eyes.

"You must fly, you must fly," she murmured breathlessly. "There s not a moment to lose." And as he stretched out his arms in the arkness to draw her to him again, she went on in tender, beseeching ones: "Oh, listen to me, I entreat you. If you die, I shall die. In n hour it will be daylight. Go, go at once; I command you to go."

Then she rapidly explained her plan to him. The iron ladder ex- ended downward to the wheel; once he got so far he could climb down y means of the buckets and get into the boat, which was hidden in a ecess. Then it would be an easy matter for him to reach the other ank of the stream and make his escape.

"But are there no sentinels?" said he.

"Only one, directly opposite here, at the foot of the first willow."

"And if he sees me, if he gives the alarm?"

Françoise shuddered. She placed in his hand a knife that she had brought down with her. They were silent.

"And your father—and you?" Dominique continued. "But no, it is not to be thought of; I must not fly. When I am no longer here those soldiers are capable of murdering you. You do not know them. They offered to spare my life if I would guide them into Sauval forest. When they discover that I have escaped, their fury will be such that they will be ready for every atrocity."

The girl did not stop to argue the question. To all the considerations that he adduced to her, her one simple answer was: "Fly. For the love of me, fly. If you love me, Dominique, do not linger here for a single moment longer."

She promised that she would return to her bedroom; no one should know that she had helped him. She concluded by folding him in her arms and smothering him with kisses, in an extravagant outburst of passion. He was vanquished. He put only one more question to her:

"Will you swear to me that your father knows what you are doing, and that he counsels my flight?"

"It was my father who sent me to you," Françoise unhesitatingly replied.

She told a falsehood. At that moment she had but one great, overmastering longing: to know that he was in safety, to escape from the horrible thought that the morning's sun was to be the signal for his death. When he should be far away, then calamity and evil might burst upon her head; whatever fate might be in store for her would seem endurable, so that only his life might be spared. Before and above all other considerations, the selfishness of her love demanded that he should be saved.

"It is well," said Dominique; "I will do as you desire."

No further word was spoken. Dominique went to the window to raise it again. But suddenly there was a noise that chilled them with affright. The door was shaken violently; they thought that someone was about to open it; it was evidently a party going the rounds who had heard their voices. They stood by the window, close locked in each other's arms, awaiting the event with anguish unspeakable. Again there came the rattling at the door, but it did not open. Each of them drew a deep sigh of relief; they saw how it was. The soldier lying

across the threshold had turned over in his sleep. Silence was restored indeed, and presently the snoring began again.

Dominique insisted that Françoise should return to her room first of all. He took her in his arms, he bade her a silent farewell, then helped her to grasp the ladder, and himself climbed out on it in turn. He refused to descend a single step, however, until he knew that she was in her chamber. When she was safe in her room she let fall, in a voice scarce louder than a whisper, the words:

"*Au revoir.* I love you!"

She kneeled at the window, resting her elbows on the sill, straining her eyes to follow Dominique. The night was still very dark. She looked for the sentinel, but could see nothing of him; the willow alone was dimly visible, a pale spot upon the surrounding blackness. For a moment she heard the rustling of the ivy as Dominique descended, then the wheel creaked, and there was a faint splash which told that the young man had found the boat. This was confirmed when, a minute later, she descried the shadowy outline of the skiff on the gray bosom of the Morelle. Then a horrible feeling of dread seemed to clutch her by the throat. Every moment she thought she heard the sentry give the alarm; every faintest sound among the dusky shadows seemed to her overwrought imagination to be the hurrying tread of soldiers, the clash of steel, the click of musket locks. The seconds slipped by, however; the landscape still preserved its solemn peace. Dominique must have landed safely on the other bank. Françoise no longer had eyes for anything. The silence was oppressive. And she heard the sound of trampling feet, a hoarse cry, the dull thud of a heavy body falling. This was followed by another silence, even deeper than that which had gone before. Then, as if conscious that Death had passed that way, she became very cold in presence of the impenetrable night.

IV

At early daybreak the repose of the mill was disturbed by the clamour of angry voices. Father Merlier had gone and unlocked Françoise's door. She descended to the courtyard, pale and very calm, but when there, could not repress a shudder upon being brought face to face with the body of a Prussian soldier that lay on the ground beside the well, stretched out upon a cloak.

Around the corpse the soldiers were shouting and gesticulating angrily. Several of them shook their fists threateningly in the direction of the village. The officer had just sent a summons to Father Merlier to appear before him in his capacity as mayor of the commune.

"Here is one of our men," he said, in a voice that was almost unintelligible from anger, "who was found murdered on the bank of the stream. The murderer must be found, so that we may make a salutary example of him, and I shall expect you to coöperate with us in finding him."

"Whatsoever you desire," the miller replied, with his customary impassiveness. "Only it will be no easy matter."

The officer stooped down and drew aside the skirt of the cloak which concealed the dead man's face, disclosing as he did so a frightful wound. The sentinel had been struck in the throat and the weapon had not been withdrawn from the wound. It was a common kitchen-knife, with a black handle.

"Look at that knife," the officer said to Father Merlier. "Perhaps it will assist us in our investigation."

The old man had started violently, but recovered himself at once; not a muscle of his face moved as he replied:

"Everyone about here has knives like that. Likely enough, your man was tired of fighting and did the business himself. Such things have happened before now."

"Be silent!" the officer shouted in a fury. "I don't know what it is that keeps me from setting fire to the four corners of your village."

His anger fortunately kept him from noticing the great change that had come over Françoise's countenance. Her feelings had compelled her to sit down upon the stone bench beside the well. Do what she would she could not remove her eyes from the body that lay stretched upon the ground, almost at her feet. He had been a tall, handsome young man in life, very like Dominique in appearance, with blue eyes and yellow hair. The resemblance went to her heart. She thought that perhaps the dead man had left behind him in his German home some sweetheart who would weep for his loss. And she recognized her knife in the dead man's throat. She had killed him.

The officer, meantime, was talking of visiting Rocreuse with some terrible punishment, when two or three soldiers came running in. The guard had just that moment ascertained the fact of Dominique's

escape. The agitation caused by the tidings was extreme. The officer went to inspect the locality, looked out through the still open window, saw at once how the event had happened, and returned in a state of exasperation.

Father Merlier appeared greatly vexed by Dominique's flight. "The idiot!" he murmured; "he has upset everything."

Françoise heard him, and was in an agony of suffering. Her father, moreover, had no suspicion of her complicity. He shook his head, saying to her in an undertone:

"We are in a nice fix now!"

"It was that scoundrel! it was that scoundrel!" cried the officer. "He has got away to the woods; but he must be found, or the village shall stand the consequences." And, addressing himself to the miller: "Come, you must know where he is hiding?"

Father Merlier laughed in his silent way, and pointed to the wide stretch of wooded hills.

"How can you expect to find a man in that wilderness?" he asked.

"Oh! there are plenty of hiding places that you are acquainted with. I am going to give you ten men; you shall act as guide to them."

"I am perfectly willing. But it will take a week to beat up all the woods of the neighbourhood."

The old man's serenity enraged the officer; he saw, indeed, what a ridiculous proceeding such a hunt would be. It was at that moment that he caught sight of Françoise where she sat, pale and trembling, on her bench. His attention was aroused by the girl's anxious attitude. He was silent for a moment, glancing suspiciously from father to daughter and back again.

"Is not that man," he at last coarsely asked the old man, "your daughter's lover?"

Father Merlier's face became ashy pale, and he appeared for a moment as if about to throw himself on the officer and throttle him. He straightened himself up and made no reply. Françoise had hidden her face in her hands.

"Yes, that is how it is," the Prussian continued; "you or your daughter have helped him to escape. You are his accomplices. For the last time, will you surrender him?"

The miller did not answer. He had turned away and was looking at the distant landscape with an air of indifference, just as if the officer

were talking to some other person. That put the finishing touch to the latter's wrath.

"Very well, then!" he declared, "you shall be shot in his stead."

And again he ordered out the firing party. Father Merlier was as imperturbable as ever. He scarcely did so much as shrug his shoulders; the whole drama appeared to him to be in very doubtful taste. He probably believed that they would not take a man's life in that unceremonious manner. When the platoon was on the ground he gravely said:

"So, then, you are in earnest? Very well, I am willing it should be so. If you feel you must have a victim, it may as well be I as another."

But Françoise arose, greatly troubled, stammering: "Have mercy, sir; do not harm my father. Kill me instead of him. It was I who helped Dominique to escape; I am the only guilty one."

"Hold your tongue, my girl," Father Merlier exclaimed. "Why do you tell such a falsehood? She passed the night locked in her room, sir; I assure you that she does not speak the truth."

"I am speaking the truth," the girl eagerly replied. "I got down by the window; I incited Dominique to fly. It is the truth, the whole truth."

The old man's face was very white. He could read in her eyes that she was not lying, and her story terrified him. Ah, those children! those children! how they spoiled everything, with their hearts and their feelings! Then he said angrily:

"She is crazy; do not listen to her. It is a lot of trash she is telling you. Come, let us get through with this business."

She persisted in her protestations; she kneeled, she raised her clasped hands in supplication. The officer stood tranquilly by and watched the harrowing scene.

"*Mon Dieu!*" he said at last. "I take your father because the other has escaped me. Bring me back the other man, and your father shall have his liberty."

She looked at him for a moment with eyes dilated by the horror which his proposal inspired in her.

"It is dreadful," she murmured. "Where can I look for Dominique now? He is gone; I know nothing beyond that."

"Well, make your choice between them; him or your father."

"Oh, my God! how can I choose? Even if I knew where to find

Dominique I could not choose. You are breaking my heart. I would rather die at once. Yes, it would be more quickly ended thus. Kill me, I beseech you, kill me—"

The officer finally became weary of this scene of despair and tears. He cried:

"Enough of this! I wish to treat you kindly; I will give you two hours. If your lover is not here within two hours, your father shall pay the penalty that he has incurred."

And he ordered Father Merlier away to the room that had served as a prison for Dominique. The old man asked for tobacco, and began to smoke. There was no trace of emotion to be descried on his impassive face. Only when he was alone he wept two big tears that coursed slowly down his cheeks. His poor, dear child, what a fearful trial she was enduring!

Françoise remained in the courtyard. Prussian soldiers passed back and forth, laughing. Some of them addressed her with coarse pleasantries which she did not understand. Her gaze was bent upon the door through which her father had disappeared, and with a slow movement she raised her hand to her forehead, as if to keep it from bursting. The officer turned sharply on his heel, and said to her:

"You have two hours. Try to make use of them."

She had two hours. The words kept buzzing, buzzing in her ears. Then she went forth mechanically from the courtyard; she walked straight ahead with no definite end. Where was she to go? what was she to do? She did not even endeavour to arrive at any decision, for she felt how utterly useless were her efforts. And yet she would have liked to see Dominique; they could have come to some understanding together, perhaps they might hit on some plan to extricate them from their difficulties. And so, amid the confusion of her whirling thoughts, she took her way downward to the bank of the Morelle, which she crossed below the dam by means of some stepping-stones which were there. Proceeding onward, still involuntarily, she came to the first willow, at the corner of the meadow, and stooping down, beheld a sight that made her grow deathly pale—a pool of blood. It was the spot. And she followed the track that Dominique had left in the tall grass; it was evident that he had run, for the footsteps that crossed the meadow in a diagonal line were separated from one another by wide intervals. Then, beyond that point, she lost the trace, but

thought she had discovered it again in an adjoining field. It led her onward to the border of the forest, where the trail came abruptly to an end.

Though conscious of the futility of the proceeding, Françoise penetrated into the wood. It was a comfort to her to be alone. She sat down for a moment, then, reflecting that time was passing, rose again to her feet. How long was it since she left the mill? Five minutes, or a half-hour? She had lost all idea of time. Perhaps Dominique had sought concealment in a clearing that she knew of, where they had gone together one afternoon and eaten hazel-nuts. She directed her steps toward the clearing; she searched it thoroughly. A blackbird flew out, whistling his sweet and melancholy note; that was all. Then she thought that he might have taken refuge in a hollow among the rocks where he went sometimes with his gun, but the spot was untenanted. What use was there in looking for him? She would never find him, and little by little the desire to discover the hiding place became a passionate longing. She proceeded at a more rapid pace. The idea suddenly took possession of her that he had climbed into a tree, and thenceforth she went along with eyes raised aloft and called him by name every fifteen or twenty steps, so that he might know she was near him. The cuckoos answered her; a breath of air that rustled the leaves made her think that he was there and coming down to her. Once she even imagined that she saw him; she stopped with a sense of suffocation, with a desire to run away. What was she to say to him? Had she come there to take him back with her and have him shot? Oh! no, she would not mention those things; she would not tell him that he must fly, that he must not remain in the neighbourhood. Then she thought of her father awaiting her return, and the reflection caused her most bitter anguish. She sank upon the turf, weeping hot tears, crying aloud:

"My God! My God! why am I here?"

It was a mad thing for her to have come. And, as if seized with sudden panic, she ran hither and thither, she sought to make her way out of the forest. Three times she lost her way, and had begun to think she was never to see the mill again, when she came out of the meadow, directly opposite Rocreuse. As soon as she caught sight of the village she stopped. Was she going to return alone? She dared not think.

She was standing there when she heard a voice calling her name, softly:

"Françoise, Françoise!"

And she beheld Dominique raising his head above the edge of a ditch. Just God! she had found him.

Could it be, then, that Heaven willed his death? She suppressed a cry that rose to her lips, and slipped into the ditch beside him.

"You were looking for me?" he asked.

"Yes," she replied bewilderedly, scarcely knowing what she was saying.

"Ah! what has happened?"

She stammered, with eyes downcast: "Why, nothing; I was anxious, I wanted to see you."

Thereupon, his fears alleviated, he went on to tell her how it was that he had remained in the vicinity. He was alarmed for them. Those rascally Prussians were not above wreaking their vengeance on women and old men. All had ended well, however, and he added, laughing:

"The wedding will be put off for a week, that's all."

He became serious, however, upon noticing that her dejection did not pass away.

"But what is the matter? You are concealing something from me."

"No, I give you my word I am not. I am tired; I ran all the way here."

He kissed her, saying it was imprudent for them both to talk there any longer, and was about to climb out of the ditch in order to return to the forest. She stopped him; she was trembling violently.

"Listen, Dominique; perhaps it will be as well for you to stay here, after all. There is no one looking for you; you have nothing to fear."

"Françoise, you are concealing something from me."

Again she protested that she was concealing nothing. She only liked to know that he was near her. And there were other reasons still that she gave in stammering accents. Her manner was so strange that no consideration could now have induced him to go away. He believed, moreover, that the French would return presently. Troops had been seen over towards Sauval.

"Ah! let them make haste; let them come as quickly as possible," she murmured fervently.

At that moment the clock of the church at Rocreuse struck eleven;

the strokes reached them, clear and distinct. She arose in terror; it was two hours since she had left the mill.

"Listen," she said, with feverish rapidity, "should we need you, I will go up to my room and wave my handkerchief from the window."

And she started off homeward on a run, while Dominique, greatly disturbed in mind, stretched himself at length beside the ditch to watch the mill. Just as she was about to enter the village Françoise encountered an old beggar man, Father Bontemps, who knew everyone and everything in that part of the country. He saluted her; he had just seen the miller, he said, surrounded by a crowd of Prussians; then, making numerous signs of the Cross and mumbling some inarticulate words, he went his way.

"The two hours are up," the officer said when Françoise made her appearance.

Father Merlier was there, seated on the bench beside the well. He was smoking still. The young girl again proffered her supplication, kneeling before the officer and weeping. Her wish was to gain time. The hope that she might yet behold the return of the French had been gaining strength in her bosom, and amid her tears and sobs she thought she could distinguish in the distance the cadenced tramp of an advancing army. Oh! if they would but come and deliver them all from their fearful trouble!

"Hear me, sir: grant us an hour, just one little hour. Surely you will not refuse to grant us an hour!"

But the officer was inflexible. He even ordered two men to lay hold of her and take her away, in order that they might proceed undisturbed with the execution of the old man. Then a dreadful conflict took place in Françoise's heart. She could not allow her father to be murdered in that manner; no, no, she would die in company with Dominique rather; and she was just darting away in the direction of her room in order to signal to her *fiancé,* when Dominique himself entered the courtyard.

The officer and his soldiers gave a great shout of triumph, but he, as if there had been no soul there but Françoise, walked straight up to her: he was perfectly calm, and his face wore a slight expression of sternness.

"You did wrong," he said. "Why did you not bring me back with

you? Had it not been for Father Bontemps I should have known nothing of all this. Well, I am here, at all events."

V

It was three o'clock. The heavens were piled high with great black clouds, the tail-end of a storm that had been raging somewhere in the vicinity. Beneath the coppery sky and ragged scud the valley of Rocreuse, so bright and smiling in the sunlight, became a grim chasm, full of sinister shadows. The Prussian officer had done nothing with Dominique beyond placing him in confinement, giving no indication of his ultimate purpose in regard to him. Françoise, since noon, had been suffering unendurable agony; notwithstanding her father's entreaties, she would not leave the courtyard. She was waiting for the French troops to appear, but the hours slipped by, night was approaching, and she suffered all the more since it appeared as if the time thus gained would have no effect on the final result.

About three o'clock, however, the Prussians began to make their preparations for departure. The officer had gone to Dominique's room and remained closeted with him for some minutes, as he had done the day before. Françoise knew that the young man's life was hanging in the balance; she clasped her hands and put up fervent prayers. Beside her sat Father Merlier, rigid and silent, declining, like the true peasant he was, to attempt any interference with accomplished facts.

"Oh! my God! my God!" Françoise exclaimed, "they are going to kill him!"

The miller drew her to him, and took her on his lap as if she had been a little child. At this juncture the officer came from the room, followed by two men conducting Dominique between them.

"Never, never," the latter exclaimed. "I am ready to die."

"You had better think the matter over," the officer replied. "I shall have no trouble in finding someone else to render us the service which you refuse. I am generous with you; I offer you your life. It is simply a matter of guiding us across the forest to Montredon; there must be paths."

Dominique made no answer.

"Then you persist in your obstinacy?"

"Shoot me, and let's have done with it," he replied.

Françoise, in the distance, entreated her lover with clasped hands; she was forgetful of all considerations save one—she would have had him commit a treason. But Father Merlier seized her hands, that the Prussians might not see the wild gestures of a woman whose mind was disordered by her distress.

"He is right," he murmured, "it is best for him to die."

The firing-party was in readiness. The officer still had hopes of bringing Dominique over, and was waiting to see him exhibit some signs of weakness. Deep silence prevailed. Heavy peals of thunder were heard in the distance, the fields and woods lay lifeless beneath the sweltering heat. And it was in the midst of this oppressive silence that suddenly the cry arose:

"The French; the French!"

It was a fact; they were coming. The line of red trousers could be seen advancing along the Sauval road, at the edge of the forest. In the mill the confusion was extreme; the Prussian soldiers ran to and fro, giving vent to guttural cries. Not a shot had been fired as yet.

"The French! the French!" cried Françoise, clapping her hands for joy. She was like a woman possessed. She had escaped from her father's embrace and was laughing boisterously, her arms raised high in the air. They had come at last, then, and had come in time, since Dominique was still there, alive!

A crash of musketry that rang in her ears like a thunderclap caused her to suddenly turn her head. The officer had muttered, "We will finish this business first," and with his own hands pushing Dominique up against the wall of a shed, had given the command to the squad to fire. When Françoise turned, Dominique was lying on the ground, pierced by a dozen bullets.

She did not shed a tear; she stood there like one suddenly rendered senseless. Her eyes were fixed and staring, and she went and seated herself beneath the shed, a few steps from the lifeless body. She looked at it wistfully; now and then she would make a movement with her hands in an aimless, childish way. The Prussians had seized Father Merlier as a hostage.

It was a pretty fight. The officer, perceiving that he could not retreat without being cut to pieces, rapidly made the best disposition possible of his men; it was as well to sell their lives dearly. The Prussians were now the defenders of the mill, and the French were the

attacking party. The musketry fire began with unparalleled fury; for half an hour there was no lull in the storm. Then a deep report was heard, and a ball carried away the main branch of the old elm. The French had artillery; a battery, in position just beyond the ditch where Dominique had concealed himself, commanded the main street of Rocreuse. The conflict could not last long after that.

Ah! the poor old mill! The cannon-balls raked it from wall to wall. Half the roof was carried away; two of the walls fell in. But it was on the side toward the Morelle that the damage was most lamentable. The ivy, torn from the tottering walls, hung in tatters, *débris* of every description floated away upon the bosom of the stream, and through a great breach Françoise's chamber was visible, with its little bed, the snow-white curtains of which were carefully drawn. Two balls struck the old wheel in quick succession, and it gave one parting groan; the buckets were carried away down stream, the frame was crushed into a shapeless mass. It was the soul of the stout old mill parting from the body.

Then the French came forward to carry the place by storm. There was a mad hand-to-hand conflict with the bayonet. Under the dull sky the pretty valley became a huge slaughter-pen; the broad meadows looked on in horror, with their great isolated trees and their rows of poplars dotting them with shade, while to right and left the forest was like the walls of a tilting-ground enclosing the combatants, and in Nature's universal panic the gentle murmur of the spring and water courses sounded like sobs and wails.

Françoise had not stirred from the shed where she remained hanging over Dominique's body. Father Merlier had met his death from a stray bullet. Then the French captain, the Prussians being exterminated and the mill on fire, entered the courtyard at the head of his men. It was the first success that he had gained since the breaking out of the war, so, all inflamed with enthusiasm, drawing himself up to the full height of his lofty stature, he laughed pleasantly, as a handsome cavalier like him might laugh. Then, perceiving poor idiotic Françoise where she crouched between the corpses of her father and her lover, among the smoking ruins of the mill, he saluted her gallantly with his sword, and shouted:

"Victory! Victory!"

A Descent into the Maelström

BY EDGAR ALLAN POE

(*1809-1849*)

> The ways of God in Nature, as in Providence, are not as *our* ways; nor are the models that we frame in any way commensurate to the vastness, profundity, and unsearchableness of His works *which have a depth in them greater than the well of Democritus.*
>
> JOSEPH GLANVILL.

WE had now reached the summit of the loftiest crag. For some minutes the old man seemed too much exhausted to speak.

"Not long ago," said he at length, "and I could have guided you on this route as well as the youngest of my sons; but, about three years past, there happened to me an event such as never happened before to mortal man—or, at least, such as no man ever survived to tell of—and the six hours of deadly terror which I then endured have broken me up body and soul. You suppose me a *very* old man—but I am not. It took less than a single day to change these hairs from a jetty black to white, to weaken my limbs, and to unstring my nerves, so that I tremble at the least exertion, and am frightened at a shadow. Do you know I can scarcely look over this little cliff without getting giddy?"

The "little cliff," upon whose edge he had so carelessly thrown himself down to rest that the weightier portion of his body hung over it, while he was only kept from falling by the tenure of his elbow on its extreme and slippery edge—this "little cliff" arose, a sheer unobstructed precipice of black shining rock, some fifteen or sixteen hundred feet from the world of crags beneath us. Nothing would have tempted me to be within half a dozen yards of its brink. In truth so deeply was I excited by the perilous position of my companion, that I fell at full length upon the ground, clung to the shrubs around me, and dared not even glance upward at the sky—while I struggled in vain to divest myself of the idea that the very foundations of the mountain were in danger from the fury of the winds. It was long before I could

reason myself into sufficient courage to sit up and look out into the distance.

"You must get over these fancies," said the guide, "for I have brought you here that you might have the best possible view of the scene of that event I mentioned—and to tell you the whole story with the spot just under your eye.

"We are now," he continued, in that particularising manner which distinguished him—"we are now close upon the Norwegian coast—in the sixty-eighth degree of latitude—in the great province of Nordland, and in the dreary district of Lofoden. The mountain upon whose top we sit is Helseggen, the Cloudy. Now raise yourself up a little higher—hold on to the grass if you feel giddy—so—and look out, beyond the belt of vapour beneath us, into the sea."

I looked dizzily, and beheld a wide expanse of ocean, whose waters wore so inky a hue as to bring at once to my mind the Nubian geographer's account of the *Mare Tenebrarum*. A panorama more deplorably desolate no human imagination can conceive. To the right and left, as far as the eye could reach, there lay outstretched, like ramparts of the world, lines of horribly black and beetling cliff, whose character of gloom was but the more forcibly illustrated by the surf which reared high against it its white and ghastly crest, howling and shrieking for ever. Just opposite the promontory upon whose apex we were placed, and at a distance of some five or six miles out at sea, there was visible a small, bleak-looking island; or, more properly, its position was discernible through the wilderness of surge in which it was enveloped. About two miles nearer the land arose another of smaller size, hideously craggy and barren, and encompassed at various intervals by a cluster of dark rocks.

The appearance of the ocean, in the space between the more distant island and the shore, had something very unusual about it. Although, at the time, so strong a gale was blowing landward that a brig in the remote offing lay to under a double-reefed trysail, and constantly plunged her whole hull out of sight, still there was here nothing like a regular swell, but only a short, quick, angry dashing of water in every direction—as well in the teeth of the wind as otherwise. Of foam there was little except in the immediate vicinity of the rocks.

"The island in the distance," resumed the old man, "is called by

the Norwegians Vurrgh. The one midway is Moskoe. That a mile to the northward is Ambaaren. Yonder are Islesen, Hotholm, Keildhelm, Suarven, and Buckholm. Farther off, between Moskoe and Vurrgh, are Otterholm, Flimen, Sandflesen, and Stockholm. These are the true names of the places, but why it has been thought necessary to name them at all, is more than either you or I can understand. Do you hear anything? Do you see any change in the water?"

We had now been about ten minutes upon the top of Helseggen, to which we had ascended from the interior of Lofoden, so that we had caught no glimpse of the sea until it had burst upon us from the summit. As the old man spoke, I became aware of a loud and gradually increasing sound, like the moaning of a vast herd of buffaloes upon an American prairie; and at the same moment I perceived that what seamen term the *chopping* character of the ocean beneath us, was rapidly changing into a current which set to the eastward. Even while I gazed, this current acquired a monstrous velocity. Each moment added to its speed, to its headlong impetuosity. In five minutes the whole sea as far as Vurrgh, was lashed into ungovernable fury; but it was between Moskoe and the coast that the main uproar held its sway. Here the vast bed of the waters, seamed and scarred into a thousand conflicting channels, burst suddenly into frenzied convulsion—heaving, boiling, hissing—gyrating in gigantic and innumerable vortices, and all whirling and plunging on to the eastward with a rapidity which water never elsewhere assumes, except in precipitous descents.

In a few minutes more, there came over the scene another radical alteration. The general surface grew somewhat more smooth, and the whirlpools, one by one, disappeared, while prodigious streaks of foam became apparent where none had been seen before. These streaks, at length, spreading out to a great distance, and entering into combination, took unto themselves the gyratory motion of the subsided waters and seemed to form the germ of another more vast. Suddenly—very suddenly—this assumed a distinct and definite existence, in a circle of more than a mile in diameter. The edge of the whirl was represented by a broad belt of gleaming spray; but no particle of this slipped into the mouth of the terrific funnel, whose interior, as far as the eye could fathom it, was a smooth, shining, and jet-black wall of water, inclined to the horizon at an angle of some forty-five degrees, speeding dizzily

round and round with a swaying and sweltering motion, and sending forth to the winds an appalling voice, half shriek, half roar, such as not even the mighty cataract of Niagara ever lifts up in its agony to Heaven.

The mountain trembled to its very base, and the rock rocked. I threw myself upon my face, and clung to the scant herbage in an excess of nervous agitation.

"This," said I at length, to the old man—"this *can* be nothing else than the great whirlpool of the Maelström."

"So it is sometimes termed," said he. "We Norwegians call it the Moskoe-ström, from the island of Moskoe in the midway."

The ordinary account of this vortex had by no means prepared me for what I saw. That of Jonas Ramus, which is perhaps the most circumstantial of any, cannot impart the faintest conception either of the magnificence, or of the horror of the scene—or of the wild bewildering sense of *the novel* which confounds the beholder. I am not sure from what point of view the writer in question surveyed it, nor at what time; but it could neither have been from the summit of Helseggen, nor during a storm. There are some passages of his description, nevertheless, which may be quoted for their details, although their effect is exceedingly feeble in conveying an impression of the spectacle.

"Between Lofoden and Moskoe," he says, "the depth of the water is between thirty-six and forty fathoms; but on the other side, toward Ver (Vurrgh) this depth decreases so as not to afford a convenient passage for a vessel without the risk of splitting on the rocks, which happens even in the calmest weather. When it is flood, the stream runs up the country between Lofoden and Moskoe with a boisterous rapidity; but the roar of its impetuous ebb to the sea is scarce equalled by the loudest and most dreadful cataracts, the noise being heard several leagues off, and the vortices or pits are of such an extent and depth, that if a ship comes within its attraction, it is inevitably absorbed and carried down to the bottom, and there beat to pieces against the rocks; and when the water relaxes, the fragments thereof are thrown up again. But these intervals of tranquillity are only at the turn of the ebb and flood, and in calm weather, and last but a quarter of an hour, its violence gradually returning. When the stream is most boisterous, and its fury heightened by a storm, it is dangerous to come

within a Norway mile of it. Boats, yachts, and ships have been carried away by not guarding against it before they were carried within its reach. It likewise happens frequently, that whales come too near the stream, and are overpowered by its violence; and then it is impossible to describe their howlings and bellowings in their fruitless struggles to disengage themselves. A bear once, attempting to swim from Lofoden to Moskoe, was caught by the stream and borne down, while he roared terribly, so as to be heard on shore. Large stocks of firs and pine-trees, after being absorbed by the current, rise again broken and torn to such a degree as if bristles grew upon them. This plainly shows the bottom to consist of craggy rocks, among which they are whirled to and fro. This stream is regulated by the flux and reflux of the sea—it being constantly high and low water every six hours. In the year 1645, early in the morning of Sexagesima Sunday, it raged with such noise and impetuosity that the very stones of the houses on the coast fell to the ground."

In regard to the depth of the water, I could not see how this could have been ascertained at all in the immediate vicinity of the vortex. The "forty fathoms" must have reference only to portions of the channel close upon the shore either of Moskoe or Lofoden. The depth in the centre of the Moskoe-ström must be unmeasurably greater; and no better proof of this fact is necessary than can be obtained from even the sidelong glance into the abyss of the whirl which may be had from the highest crag of Helseggen. Looking down from this pinnacle upon the howling Phlegethon below, I could not help smiling at the simplicity with which the honest Jonas Ramus records, as a matter difficult of belief, the anecdotes of the whales and the bears, for it appeared to me, in fact, a self-evident thing, that the largest ships of the line in existence, coming within the influence of that deadly attraction, could resist it as little as a feather the hurricane, and must disappear bodily and at once.

The attempts to account for the phenomenon—some of which, I remember, seemed to me sufficiently plausible in perusal—now wore a very different and unsatisfactory aspect. The idea generally received is that this, as well as three smaller vortices among the Ferroe Islands, "have no other cause than the collision of waves rising and falling, at flux and reflux, against a ridge of rocks and shelves, which confines the water so that it precipitates itself like a cataract; and thus the higher

the flood rises, the deeper must the fall be, and the natural result of all is a whirlpool or vortex, the prodigious suction of which is sufficiently known by lesser experiments."—These are the words of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Kircher and others imagine that in the centre of the channel of the Maelström is an abyss penetrating the globe, and issuing in some very remote part—the Gulf of Bothnia being somewhat decidedly named in one instance. This opinion, idle in itself, was the one to which, as I gazed, my imagination most readily assented; and, mentioning it to the guide, I was rather surprised to hear him say that, although it was the view almost universally entertained of the subject by the Norwegians, it nevertheless was not his own. As to the former notion he confessed his inability to comprehend it; and here I agreed with him—for, however conclusive on paper, it becomes altogether unintelligible, and even absurd, amid the thunder of the abyss.

"You have a good look at the whirl now," said the old man, "and if you creep round this crag, so as to get in its lee, and deaden the roar of the water, I will tell you a story that will convince you I ought to know something of the Moskoe-ström."

I placed myself as desired, and he proceeded.

"Myself and my two brothers once owned a schooner-rigged smack of about seventy tons burthen, with which we were in the habit of fishing among the islands beyond Moskoe, nearly to Vurrgh. In all violent eddies at sea there is good fishing, at proper opportunities, if only one has the courage to attempt it: but among the whole of the Lofoden coastmen, we three were the only ones who made a regular business of going out to the islands, as I tell you. The usual grounds are a great way lower down to the southward. There fish can be got at all hours, without much risk, and therefore these places are preferred. The choice spots over here among the rocks, however, not only yield the finest variety, but in far greater abundance; so that we often got in a single day, what the more timid of the craft could not scrape together in a week. In fact, we made it a matter of desperate speculation—the risk of life standing instead of labour, and courage answering for capital.

"We kept the smack in a cove about five miles higher up the coast than this; and it was our practice, in fine weather, to take advantage of the fifteen minutes' slack to push across the main channel of the Moskoe-ström, far above the pool, and then drop down upon anchorage

somewhere near Otterholm, or Sandflesen, where the eddies are not so violent as elsewhere. Here we used to remain until nearly time for slack-water again, when we weighed and made for home. We never set out upon this expedition without a steady side wind for going and coming—one that we felt sure would not fail us before our return—and we seldom made a miscalculation upon this point. Twice, during six years, we were forced to stay all night at anchor on account of a dead calm, which is a rare thing indeed just about here; and once we had to remain on the grounds nearly a week, starving to death, owing to a gale which blew up shortly after our arrival and made the channel too boisterous to be thought of. Upon this occasion we should have driven out to sea in spite of everything (for the whirlpools threw us round and round so violently, that, at length, we fouled our anchor and dragged it) if it had not been that we drifted into one of the innumerable cross currents—here today and gone tomorrow—which drove us under the lee of Flimen, where, by good luck, we brought up.

"I could not tell you the twentieth part of the difficulties we encountered 'on the ground'—it is a bad spot to be in, even in good weather—but we made shift always to run the gauntlet of the Moskoeström itself without accident; although at times my heart has been in my mouth when we happened to be a minute or so behind or before the slack. The wind sometimes was not as strong as we thought it at starting, and then we made rather less way than we could wish, while the current rendered the smack unmanageable. My eldest brother had a son eighteen years old, and I had two stout boys of my own. These would have been of great assistance at such times, in using the sweeps as well as afterward in fishing, but, somehow, although we ran the risk ourselves, we had not the heart to let the young ones get into the danger—for, after all is said and done, it *was* a horrible danger, and that is the truth.

"It is now within a few days of three years since what I am going to tell you occurred. It was on the tenth of July, 18—, a day which the people of this part of the world will never forget—for it was one in which blew the most terrible hurricane that ever came out of the heavens. And yet all the morning, and indeed until late in the afternoon, there was a gentle and steady breeze from the south-west, while the sun shone brightly, so that the oldest seaman among us could not have foreseen what was to follow.

"The three of us—my two brothers and myself—had crossed over to the islands about two o'clock P.M., and soon nearly loaded the smack with fine fish, which, we all remarked, were more plenty that day than we had ever known them. It was just seven, *by my watch,* when we weighed and started for home, so as to make the worst of the Ström at slack water, which we knew would be at eight.

"We set out with a fresh wind on our starboard quarter, and for some time spanked along at a great rate, never dreaming of danger, for indeed we saw not the slightest reason to apprehend it. All at once we were taken aback by a breeze from over Helseggen. This was most unusual—something that had never happened to us before—and I began to feel a little uneasy, without exactly knowing why. We put the boat on the wind, but could make no headway at all for the eddies, and I was upon the point of proposing to return to the anchorage, when, looking astern, we saw the whole horizon covered with a singular copper-coloured cloud that rose with the most amazing velocity.

"In the meantime the breeze that had headed us off fell away, and we were dead becalmed, drifting about in every direction. This state of things, however, did not last long enough to give us time to think about it. In less than a minute the storm was upon us—in less than two the sky was entirely overcast—and what with this and the driving spray, it became suddenly so dark that we could not see each other in the smack.

"Such a hurricane as then blew it is folly to attempt describing. The oldest seaman in Norway never experienced anything like it. We had let our sails go by the run before it cleverly took us; but, at the first puff, both our masts went by the board as if they had been sawed off—the mainmast taking with it my youngest brother, who had lashed himself to it for safety.

"Our boat was the lightest feather of a thing that ever sat upon water. It had a complete flush deck, with only a small hatch near the bow, and this hatch it had always been our custom to batten down when about to cross the Ström, by way of precaution against the chopping seas. But for this circumstance we should have foundered at once, for we lay entirely buried for some moments. How my elder brother escaped destruction I cannot say, for I never had an opportunity of ascertaining. For my own part, as soon as I had let the foresail run,

I threw myself flat on deck, with my feet against the narrow gunwale of the bow, and with my hands grasping a ring-bolt near the foot of the foremast. It was mere instinct that prompted me to do this—which was undoubtedly the very best thing I could have done—for I was too much flurried to think.

"For some moments we were completely deluged, as I say, and all this time I held my breath, and clung to the bolt. When I could stand it no longer I raised myself upon my knees, still keeping hold with my hands, and thus got my head clear. Presently our little boat gave herself a shake, just as a dog does in coming out of the water, and thus rid herself, in some measure, of the seas. I was now trying to get the better of the stupor that had come over me, and to collect my senses so as to see what was to be done, when I felt somebody grasp my arm. It was my elder brother, and my heart leaped for joy, for I had made sure that he was overboard; but the next moment all this joy was turned into horror, for he put his mouth close to my ear, and screamed out the word *'Moskoe-ström!'*

"No one ever will know what my feelings were at that moment. I shook from head to foot as if I had had the most violent fit of the ague. I knew what he meant by that one word well enough—I knew what he wished to make me understand. With the wind that now drove us on, we were bound for the whirl of the Ström, and nothing could save us!

"You perceive that in crossing the Ström *channel,* we always went a long way up above the whirl, even in the calmest weather, and then had to wait and watch carefully for the slack—but now we were driving right upon the pool itself, and in such a hurricane as this! 'To be sure,' I thought, 'we shall get there just about the slack—there is some little hope in that;' but in the next moment I cursed myself for being so great a fool as to dream of hope at all. I knew very well that we were doomed, had we been ten times a ninety-gun ship.

"By this time the first fury of the tempest had spent itself, or perhaps we did not feel it so much, as we scudded before it, but at all events the seas, which at first had been kept down by the wind, and lay flat and frothing, now got up into absolute mountains. A singular change, too, had come over the heavens. Around in every direction it was still as black as pitch, but nearly overhead there burst out, all at once, a circular rift of clear sky—as clear as I ever saw, and of a

deep bright blue—and through it there blazed forth the full moon with a lustre that I never before knew her to wear. She lit up everything about us with the greatest distinctness—but, O God, what a scene it was to light up!

"I now made one or two attempts to speak to my brother, but in some manner which I could not understand, the din had so increased that I could not make him hear a single word, although I screamed at the top of my voice in his ear. Presently he shook his head, looking as pale as death, and held up one of his fingers, as if to say *'listen!'*

"At first I could not make out what he meant, but soon a hideous thought flashed upon me. I dragged my watch from its fob. It was not going. I glanced at its face by the moonlight, and then burst into tears as I flung it far away into the ocean. *It had run down at seven o'clock! We were behind the time of the slack, and the whirl of the Ström was in full fury!*

"When a boat is well built, properly trimmed, and not deep laden, the waves in a strong gale, when she is going large, seem always to slip from beneath her—which appears strange to a landsman—and this is what is called *riding,* in sea phrase. Well, so far we had ridden the swells very cleverly; but presently a gigantic sea happened to take us right under the counter, and bore us with it as it rose—up—up—as if into the sky. I would not have believed that any wave could rise so high. And then down we came with a sweep, a slide, and a plunge that made me feel sick and dizzy, as if I was falling from some lofty mountain-top in a dream. But while we were up I had thrown a quick glance around—and that one glance was all-sufficient. I saw our exact position in an instant. The Moskoe-ström whirlpool was about a quarter of a mile dead ahead—but no more like the everyday Moskoe-ström than the whirl, as you now see it, is like a mill-race. If I had not known where we were, and what we had to expect, I should not have recognised the place at all. As it was, I involuntarily closed my eyes in horror. The lids clenched themselves together as if in a spasm.

"It could not have been more than two minutes afterwards until we suddenly felt the waves subside, and were enveloped in foam. The boat made a sharp half-turn to larboard, and then shot off in its new direction like a thunderbolt. At the same moment the roaring noise of the water was completely drowned in a kind of shrill shriek—such a

sound as you might imagine given out by the water-pipes of many thousand steam-vessels letting off their steam all together. We were now in the belt of surf that always surrounds the whirl; and I thought, of course, that another moment would plunge us into the abyss, down which we could only see indistinctly on account of the amazing velocity with which we were borne along. The boat did not seem to sink into the water at all, but to skim like an air-bubble upon the surface of the surge. Her starboard side was next the whirl, and on the larboard arose the world of ocean we had left. It stood like a huge writhing wall between us and the horizon.

"It may appear strange, but now, when we were in the very jaws of the gulf, I felt more composed than when we were only approaching it. Having made up my mind to hope no more, I got rid of a great deal of that terror which unmanned me at first. I suppose it was despair that strung my nerves.

"It may look like boasting, but what I tell you is truth. I began to reflect how magnificent a thing it was to die in such a manner, and how foolish it was in me to think of so paltry a consideration as my own individual life in view of so wonderful a manifestation of God's power. I do believe that I blushed with shame when this idea crossed my mind. After a little while I became possessed with the keenest curiosity about the whirl itself. I positively felt a *wish* to explore its depths, even at the sacrifice I was going to make; and my principal grief was that I should never be able to tell my old companions on shore about the mysteries I should see. These, no doubt, were singular fancies to occupy a man's mind in such extremity; and I have often thought since, that the revolutions of the boat around the pool might have rendered me a little light-headed.

"There was another circumstance which tended to restore my self-possession, and this was the cessation of the wind, which could not reach us in our present situation,—for, as you saw for yourself, the belt of surf is considerably lower than the general bed of the ocean, and this latter now towered above us, a high, black, mountainous ridge. If you have never been at sea in a heavy gale, you can form no idea of the confusion of mind occasioned by the wind and spray together. They blind, deafen, and strangle you, and take away all power of action or reflection. But we were now, in a great measure, rid of these

annoyances—just as death-condemned felons in prison are allowed petty indulgences, forbidden them while their doom is yet uncertain.

"How often we made the circuit of the belt it is impossible to say. We careered round and round for perhaps an hour, flying rather than floating, getting gradually more and more into the middle of the surge, and then nearer and nearer to its horrible inner edge. All this time I had never let go of the ring-bolt. My brother was at the stern, holding on to a small empty water-cask which had been securely lashed under the coop of the counter, and was the only thing on deck that had not been swept overboard when the gale first took us. As we approached the brink of the pit he let go his hold upon this, and made for the ring, from which, in the agony of his terror, he endeavoured to force my hands, as it was not large enough to afford us both a secure grasp. I never felt deeper grief than when I saw him attempt this act—although I knew he was a madman when he did it—a raving maniac through sheer fright. I did not care, however, to contest the point with him. I knew it could make no difference whether either of us held on at all; so I let him have the bolt, and went astern to the cask. This there was no great difficulty in doing; for the smack flew round steadily enough, and upon an even keel, only swaying to and fro with the immense sweeps and swelters of the whirl. Scarcely had I secured myself in my new position, when we gave a wild lurch to starboard, and rushed headlong into the abyss. I muttered a hurried prayer to God, and thought all was over.

"As I felt the sickening sweep of the descent, I had instinctively tightened my hold upon the barrel and closed my eyes. For some seconds I dared not open them, while I expected instant destruction, and wondered that I was not already in my death-struggles with the water. But moment after moment elapsed. I still lived. The sense of falling had ceased; and the motion of the vessel seemed much as it had been before while in the belt of foam, with the exception that she now lay more along. I took courage, and looked once again upon the scene.

"Never shall I forget the sensation of awe, horror, and admiration with which I gazed about me. The boat appeared to be hanging, as if by magic, midway down, upon the interior surface of a funnel vast in circumference, prodigious in depth, and whose perfectly smooth sides might have been mistaken for ebony but for the bewildering

rapidity with which they spun around, and for the gleaming and ghastly radiance they shot forth, as the rays of the full moon, from that circular rift amid the clouds which I have already described, streamed in a flood of golden glory along the black walls, and far away down into the inmost recesses of the abyss.

"At first I was too much confused to observe anything accurately. The general burst of terrific grandeur was all that I beheld. When I recovered myself a little, however, my gaze fell instinctively downward. In this direction I was able to obtain an unobstructed view from the manner in which the smack hung on the inclined surface of the pool. She was quite upon an even keel—that is to say, her deck lay in a plane parallel with that of the water—but this latter sloped at an angle of more than forty-five degrees, so that we seemed to be lying upon our beam ends. I could not help observing, nevertheless, that I had scarcely more difficulty in maintaining my hold and footing in this situation than if we had been upon a dead level; and this, I suppose, was owing to the speed at which we revolved.

"The rays of the moon seemed to search the very bottom of the profound gulf; but still I could make out nothing distinctly on account of a thick mist in which everything there was enveloped, and over which there hung a magnificent rainbow, like that narrow and tottering bridge which Mussulmans say is the only pathway between Time and Eternity. This mist or spray was no doubt occasioned by the clashing of the great walls of the funnel, as they all met together at the bottom, but the yell that went up to the heavens from out of that mist I dare not attempt to describe.

"Our first slide into the abyss itself, from the belt of foam above, had carried us to a great distance down the slope; but our further descent was by no means proportionate. Round and round we swept, not with any uniform movement, but in dizzying swings and jerks that sent us sometimes only a few hundred yards, sometimes nearly the complete circuit of the whirl. Our progress downward, at each revolution, was slow, but very perceptible.

"Looking about me upon the wide waste of liquid ebony on which we were thus borne, I perceived that our boat was not the only object in the embrace of the whirl. Both above and below us were fragments of vessels, large masses of building-timber and trunks of trees, with many smaller articles, such as pieces of house furniture,

broken boxes, barrels and staves. I have already described the unnatural curiosity which had taken the place of my original terrors. It appeared to grow upon me as I drew nearer and nearer to my dreadful doom. I now began to watch, with a strange interest, the numerous things that floated in our company. I *must* have been delirious, for I even sought *amusement* in speculating upon the relative velocities of their several descents toward the foam below. 'This fir-tree,' I found myself at one time saying, 'will certainly be the next thing that takes the awful plunge and disappears;' and then I was disappointed to find that the wreck of a Dutch merchant ship overtook it and went down before. At length, after making several guesses of this nature, and being deceived in all, this fact—the fact of my invariable miscalculation—set me upon a train of reflection that made my limbs tremble again, and my heart beat heavily once more.

"It was not a new terror that thus affected me, but the dawn of a more exciting *hope*. This hope arose partly from memory, and partly from present observation. I called to mind the great variety of buoyant matter that strewed the coast of Lofoden, having been absorbed and then thrown forth by the Moskoe-ström. By far the greater number of the articles were shattered in the most extraordinary manner—so chafed and roughened as to have the appearance of being stuck full of splinters—but then I distinctly recollected that there were *some* of them which were not disfigured at all. Now I could not account for this difference except by supposing that the roughened fragments were the only ones which had been *completely absorbed*—that the others had entered the whirl at so late a period of the tide, or, from some reason, had descended so slowly after entering, that they did not reach the bottom before the turn of the flood came, or of the ebb, as the case might be. I conceived it possible, in either instance, that they might thus be whirled up again to the level of the ocean, without undergoing the fate of those which had been drawn in more early or absorbed more rapidly. I made, also, three important observations. The first was that, as a general rule, the larger the bodies were, the more rapid their descent; the second, that, between two masses of equal extent, the one spherical, and the other *of any other shape,* the superiority in speed of descent was with the sphere; the third, that, between two masses of equal size, the one cylindrical, and the other of any other shape, the cylinder was absorbed the more slowly. Since

my escape, I have had several conversations on this subject with an old schoolmaster of the district, and it was from him that I learned the use of the words 'cylinder' and 'sphere.' He explained to me—although I have forgotten the explanation—how what I observed was, in fact, the natural consequence of the forms of the floating fragments, and showed me how it happened that a cylinder, swimming in a vortex, offered more resistance to its suction, and was drawn in with greater difficulty than an equally bulky body, of any form whatever.[1]

"There was one startling circumstance which went a great way in enforcing these observations, and rendering me anxious to turn them to account, and this was that, at every revolution, we passed something like a barrel, or else the yard or the mast of a vessel, while many of these things which had been on our level when I first opened my eyes upon the wonders of the whirlpool were now high up above us, and seemed to have moved but little from their original station.

"I no longer hesitated what to do. I resolved to lash myself securely to the water-cask upon which I now held, to cut it loose from the counter, and to throw myself with it into the water. I attracted my brother's attention by signs, pointed to the floating barrels that came near us, and did everything in my power to make him understand what I was about to do. I thought at length that he comprehended my design, but, whether this was the case or not, he shook his head despairingly, and refused to move from his station by the ring-bolt. It was impossible to reach him, the emergency admitted of no delay, and so, with a bitter struggle, I resigned him to his fate, fastened myself to the cask by means of the lashings which secured it to the counter, and precipitated myself with it into the sea, without another moment's hesitation.

"The result was precisely what I hoped it might be. As it is myself who now tell you this tale; as you see that I *did* escape, and as you are already in possession of the mode in which this escape was effected, and must therefore anticipate all that I have further to say, I will bring my story quickly to conclusion. It might have been an hour, or thereabouts, after my quitting the smack, when having descended to a vast distance beneath me, it made three or four wild gyrations in rapid succession, and, bearing my loved brother with it, plunged headlong, at once and for ever, into the chaos of foam below. The barrel to which

[1] See Archimedes, "*De Incidentibus in Fluido*," lib. 2.

I was attached sank very little farther than half the distance between the bottom of the gulf and the spot at which I leaped overboard, before a great change took place in the character of the whirlpool. The slope of the sides of the vast funnel became momently less and less steep. The gyrations of the whirl grew gradually less and less violent. By degrees the froth and the rainbow disappeared, and the bottom of the gulf seemed slowly to uprise. The sky was clear, the winds had gone down, and the full moon was setting radiantly in the west, when I found myself on the surface of the ocean, in full view of the shores of Lofoden, and above the spot where the pool of the Moskoe-ström *had been*. It was the hour of the slack, but the sea still heaved in mountainous waves from the effects of the hurricane. I was borne violently into the channel of the Ström, and in a few minutes was hurried down the coast into the 'grounds' of the fishermen. A boat picked me up, exhausted from fatigue and—now that the danger was removed—speechless from the memory of its horror. Those who drew me on board were my old mates and daily companions, but they knew me no more than they would have known a traveller from the spirit-land. My hair, which had been raven black the day before, was as white as you see it now. They say too that the whole expression of my countenance had changed. I told them my story—they did not believe it. I now tell it to *you*, and I can scarcely expect you to put more faith in it than did the merry fishermen of Lofoden."

The Bear-hunt

BY LEO TOLSTOY

(*1828-1910*)

TRANSLATED BY LOUISE AND AYLMER MAUDE

We were out on a bear-hunting expedition. My comrade had shot at a bear, but only gave him a flesh-wound. There were traces of blood on the snow, but the bear had got away.

We all collected in a group in the forest, to decide whether we ought to go after the bear at once, or wait two or three days till he should settle down again. We asked the peasant bear-drivers whether it would be possible to get round the bear that day.

"No. It's impossible," said an old bear-driver. "You must let the bear quiet down. In five days' time it will be possible to surround him; but if you followed him now, you would only frighten him away, and he would not settle down."

But a young bear-driver began disputing with the old man, saying that it was quite possible to get round the bear now.

"On such snow as this," said he, "he won't go far, for he is a fat bear. He will settle down before evening; or, if not, I can overtake him on snowshoes."

The comrade I was with was against following up the bear, and advised waiting. But I said:

"We need not argue. You do as you like, but I will follow up the track with Damian. If we get round the bear, all right. If not, we lose nothing. It is still early, and there is nothing else for us to do today."

So it was arranged.

The others went back to the sledges, and returned to the village. Damian and I took some bread, and remained behind in the forest.

When they had all left us, Damian and I examined our guns, and after tucking the skirts of our warm coats into our belts, we started off, following the bear's tracks.

The weather was fine, frosty and calm; but it was hard work snow-shoeing. The snow was deep and soft: it had not caked together at all in the forest, and fresh snow had fallen the day before, so that our snow-shoes sank six inches deep in the snow, and sometimes more.

The bear's tracks were visible from a distance, and we could see how he had been going; sometimes sinking in up to his belly and ploughing up the snow as he went. At first, while under large trees, we kept in sight of his track; but when it turned into a thicket of small firs, Damian stopped.

"We must leave the trail now," said he. "He has probably settled somewhere here. You can see by the snow that he has been squatting down. Let us leave the track and go round; but we must go quietly. Don't shout or cough, or we shall frighten him away."

Leaving the track, therefore, we turned off to the left. But when we had gone about five hundred yards, there were the bear's traces again right before us. We followed them, and they brought us out on to the road. There we stopped, examining the road to see which way the bear had gone. Here and there in the snow were prints of the bear's paw, claws and all, and here and there the marks of a peasant's bark shoes. The bear had evidently gone towards the village.

As we followed the road, Damian said:

"It's no use watching the road now. We shall see where he has turned off, to right or left, by the marks in the soft snow at the side. He must have turned off somewhere; for he won't have gone on to the village."

We went along the road for nearly a mile, and then saw, ahead of us, the bear's track turning off the road. We examined it. How strange! It was a bear's track right enough, only not going from the road into the forest, but from the forest on to the road! The toes were pointing towards the road.

"This must be another bear," I said.

Damian looked at it, and considered a while.

"No," said he. "It's the same one. He's been playing tricks, and walked backwards when he left the road."

We followed the track, and found it really was so! The bear had gone some ten steps backwards, and then, behind a fir tree, had turned round and gone straight ahead. Damian stopped and said:

"Now, we are sure to get round him. There is a marsh ahead of us, and he must have settled down there. Let us go round it."

We began to make our way round, through a fir thicket. I was tired out by this time, and it had become still more difficult to get along. Now I glided on to juniper bushes and caught my snow-shoes in them, now a tiny fir tree appeared between my feet, or, from want of practice, my snow-shoes slipped off; and now I came upon a stump or a log hidden by the snow. I was getting very tired, and was drenched with perspiration; and I took off my fur cloak. And there was Damian all the time, gliding along as if in a boat, his snow-shoes moving as if of their own accord, never catching against anything, nor slipping off. He even took my fur and slung it over his shoulder, and still kept urging me on.

We went on for two more miles, and came out on the other side of the marsh. I was lagging behind. My snow-shoes kept slipping off, and my feet stumbled. Suddenly Damian, who was ahead of me, stopped and waved his arm. When I came up to him, he bent down, pointing with his hand, and whispered:

"Do you see the magpie chattering above that undergrowth? It scents the bear from afar. That is where he must be."

We turned off and went on for more than another half-mile, and presently we came on to the old track again. We had, therefore, been right round the bear, who was now within the track we had left. We stopped, and I took off my cap and loosened all my clothes. I was as hot as in a steam bath, and as wet as a drowned rat. Damian too was flushed, and wiped his face with his sleeve.

"Well, sir," he said, "we have done our job, and now we must have a rest."

The evening glow already showed red through the forest. We took off our snow-shoes and sat down on them, and got some bread and salt out of our bags. First I ate some snow, and then some bread; and the bread tasted so good, that I thought I had never in my life had any like it before. We sat there resting until it began to grow dusk, and then I asked Damian if it was far to the village.

"Yes," he said. "It must be about eight miles. We will go on there tonight, but now we must rest. Put on your fur coat, sir, or you'll be catching cold."

Damian flattened down the snow, and breaking off some fir branches made a bed of them. We lay down side by side, resting our heads on

our arms. I do not remember how I fell asleep. Two hours later I woke up, hearing something crack.

I had slept so soundly that I did not know where I was. I looked around me. How wonderful! I was in some sort of a hall, all glittering and white with gleaming pillars, and when I looked up I saw, through delicate white tracery, a vault, raven black and studded with coloured lights. After a good look, I remembered that we were in the forest, and that what I took for a hall and pillars, were trees covered with snow and hoar-frost, and the coloured lights were stars twinkling between the branches.

Hoar-frost had settled in the night; all the twigs were thick with it, Damian was covered with it, it was on my fur coat, and it dropped down from the trees. I woke Damian; and we put on our snow-shoes and started. It was very quiet in the forest. No sound was heard but that of our snow-shoes pushing through the soft snow; except when now and then a tree, cracked by the frost, made the forest resound. Only once we heard the sound of a living creature. Something rustled close to us, and then rushed away. I felt sure it was the bear, but when we went to the spot whence the sound had come, we found the footmarks of hares, and saw several young aspen trees with their bark gnawed. We had startled some hares while they were feeding.

We came out on the road, and followed it, dragging our snow-shoes behind us. It was easy walking now. Our snow-shoes clattered as they slid behind us from side to side of the hard-trodden road. The snow creaked under our boots, and the cold hoar-frost settled on our faces like down. Seen through the branches, the stars seemed to be running to meet us, now twinkling, now vanishing, as if the whole sky were on the move.

I found my comrade sleeping, but woke him up, and related how we had got round the bear. After telling our peasant host to collect beaters for the morning, we had supper and lay down to sleep.

I was so tired that I could have slept on till midday, if my comrade had not roused me. I jumped up, and saw that he was already dressed, and busy doing something to his gun.

"Where is Damian?" said I.

"In the forest, long ago. He has already been over the tracks you made, and been back here, and now he has gone to look after the beaters."

I washed and dressed, and loaded my guns; and then we got into a sledge, and started.

The sharp frost still continued. It was quiet, and the sun could not be seen. There was a thick mist above us, and hoar-frost still covered everything.

After driving about two miles along the road, as we came near the forest, we saw a cloud of smoke rising from a hollow, and presently reached a group of peasants, both men and women, armed with cudgels.

We got out and went up to them. The men sat roasting potatoes, and laughing and talking with the women.

Damian was there too; and when we arrived the people got up, and Damian led them away to place them in the circle we had made the day before. They went along in single file, men and women, thirty in all. The snow was so deep that we could only see them from their waists upwards. They turned into the forest, and my friend and I followed in their track.

Though they had trodden a path, walking was difficult; but, on the other hand, it was impossible to fall: it was like walking between two walls of snow.

We went on in this way for nearly half a mile, when all at once we saw Damian coming from another direction—running towards us on his snow-shoes, and beckoning us to join him. We went towards him, and he showed us where to stand. I took my place, and looked round me.

To my left were tall fir trees, between the trunks of which I could see a good way, and, like a black patch just visible behind the trees, I could see a beater. In front of me was a thicket of young firs, about as high as a man, their branches weighed down and stuck together with snow. Through this copse ran a path thickly covered with snow, and leading straight up to where I stood. The thicket stretched away to the right of me, and ended in a small glade, where I could see Damian placing my comrade.

I examined both my guns, and considered where I had better stand. Three steps behind me was a tall fir.

"That's where I'll stand," thought I, "and then I can lean my second gun against the tree"; and I moved towards the tree, sinking up to my knees in the snow at each step. I trod the snow down, and made a clearance about a yard square, to stand on. One gun I kept in my hand; the

other, ready cocked, I placed leaning up against the tree. Then I unsheathed and replaced my dagger, to make sure that I could draw it easily in case of need.

Just as I had finished these preparations, I heard Damian shouting in the forest:

"He's up! He's up!"

And as soon as Damian shouted, the peasants round the circle all replied in their different voices.

"Up, up, up! Ou! Ou! Ou!" shouted the men.

"Ay! Ay! Ay!" screamed the women in high-pitched tones.

The bear was inside the circle, and as Damian drove him on, the people all round kept shouting. Only my friend and I stood silent and motionless, waiting for the bear to come towards us. As I stood gazing and listening, my heart beat violently. I trembled, holding my gun fast.

"Now, now," I thought. "He will come suddenly. I shall aim, fire, and he will drop—"

Suddenly, to my left, but at a distance, I heard something falling on the snow. I looked between the tall fir trees, and, some fifty paces off, behind the trunks, saw something big and black. I took aim and waited, thinking:

"Won't he come any nearer?"

As I waited I saw him move his ears, turn, and go back; and then I caught a glimpse of the whole of him in profile. He was an immense brute. In my excitement, I fired, and heard my bullet go "flop" against a tree. Peering through the smoke, I saw my bear scampering back into the circle, and disappearing among the trees.

"Well," thought I. "My chance is lost. He won't come back to me. Either my comrade will shoot him, or he will escape through the line of beaters. In any case he won't give me another chance."

I reloaded my gun, however, and again stood listening. The peasants were shouting all round, but to the right, not far from where my comrade stood, I heard a woman screaming in a frenzied voice:

"Here he is! Here he is! Come here, come here! Oh! Oh! Ay! Ay!"

Evidently she could see the bear. I had given up expecting him, and was looking to the right at my comrade. All at once I saw Damian with a stick in his hand, and without his snow-shoes, running along a footpath towards my friend. He crouched down beside him, pointing his

stick as if aiming at something, and then I saw my friend raise his gun and aim in the same direction. Crack! He fired.

"There," thought I. "He has killed him."

But I saw that my comrade did not run towards the bear. Evidently he had missed him, or the shot had not taken full effect.

"The bear will get away," I thought. "He will go back, but he won't come a second time towards me.—But what is that?"

Something was coming towards me like a whirlwind, snorting as it came; and I saw the snow flying up quite near me. I glanced straight before me, and there was the bear, rushing along the path through the thicket right at me, evidently beside himself with fear. He was hardly half a dozen paces off, and I could see the whole of him—his black chest and enormous head with a reddish patch. There he was, blundering straight at me, and scattering the snow about as he came. I could see by his eyes that he did not see me, but, mad with fear, was rushing blindly along; and his path led him straight at the tree under which I was standing. I raised my gun and fired. He was almost upon me now, and I saw that I had missed. My bullet had gone past him, and he did not even hear me fire, but still came headlong towards me. I lowered my gun, and fired again, almost touching his head. Crack! I had hit, but not killed him!

He raised his head, and laying his ears back, came at me, showing his teeth.

I snatched at my other gun, but almost before I had touched it, he had flown at me and, knocking me over into the snow, had passed right over me.

"Thank goodness, he has left me," thought I.

I tried to rise, but something pressed me down, and prevented my getting up. The bear's rush had carried him past me, but he had turned back, and had fallen on me with the whole weight of his body. I felt something heavy weighing me down, and something warm above my face, and I realized that he was drawing my whole face into his mouth. My nose was already in it, and I felt the heat of it, and smelt his blood. He was pressing my shoulders down with his paws so that I could not move: all I could do was to draw my head down towards my chest away from his mouth, trying to free my nose and eyes, while he tried to get his teeth into them. Then I felt that he had seized my forehead just under the hair with the teeth of his lower jaw, and the

flesh below my eyes with his upper jaw, and was closing his teeth. It was as if my face were being cut with knives. I struggled to get away, while he made haste to close his jaws like a dog gnawing. I managed to twist my face away, but he began drawing it again into his mouth.

"Now," thought I, "my end has come!"

Then I felt the weight lifted, and looking up, I saw that he was no longer there. He had jumped off me and run away.

When my comrade and Damian had seen the bear knock me down and begin worrying me, they rushed to the rescue. My comrade, in his haste, blundered, and instead of following the trodden path, ran into the deep snow and fell down. While he was struggling out of the snow, the bear was gnawing at me. But Damian just as he was, without a gun, and with only a stick in his hand, rushed along the path shouting:

"He's eating the master! He's eating the master!"

And, as he ran, he called to the bear:

"Oh, you idiot! What are you doing? Leave off! Leave off!"

The bear obeyed him, and leaving me ran away. When I rose, there was as much blood on the snow as if a sheep had been killed, and the flesh hung in rags above my eyes, though in my excitement I felt no pain.

My comrade had come up by this time, and the other people collected round: they looked at my wound, and put snow on it. But I, forgetting about my wounds, only asked:

"Where's the bear? Which way has he gone?"

Suddenly I heard:

"Here he is! Here he is!"

And we saw the bear again running at us. We seized our guns, but before anyone had time to fire, he had run past. He had grown ferocious, and wanted to gnaw me again, but seeing so many people he took fright. We saw by his track that his head was bleeding, and we wanted to follow him up; but, as my wounds had become very painful, we went, instead, to the town to find a doctor.

The doctor stitched up my wounds with silk, and they soon began to heal.

A month later we went to hunt that bear again, but I did not get a chance of finishing him. He would not come out of the circle, but went round and round, growling in a terrible voice.

Damian killed him. The bear's lower jaw had been broken, and one of his teeth knocked out by my bullet.

He was a huge creature, and had splendid black fur.

I had him stuffed, and he now lies in my room. The wounds on my forehead healed up so that the scars can scarcely be seen.

The Body-snatcher

BY ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

(*1850-1894*)

EVERY night in the year, four of us sat in the small parlour of the George at Debenham—the undertaker, and the landlord, and Fettes, and myself. Sometimes there would be more; but blow high, blow low, come rain or snow or frost, we four would be each planted in his own particular armchair. Fettes was an old drunken Scotchman, a man of education obviously, and a man of some property, since he lived in idleness. He had come to Debenham years ago, while still young, and by a mere continuance of living had grown to be an adopted townsman. His blue camlet cloak was a local antiquity, like the church-spire. His place in the parlour at the George, his absence from church, his old, crapulous, disreputable vices, were all things of course in Debenham. He had some vague Radical opinions and some fleeting infidelities, which he would now and again set forth and emphasise with tottering slaps upon the table. He drank rum—five glasses regularly every evening; and for the greater portion of his nightly visit to the George sat, with his glass in his right hand, in a state of melancholy alcoholic saturation. We called him the Doctor, for he was supposed to have some special knowledge of medicine, and had been known, upon a pinch, to set a fracture or reduce a dislocation; but beyond these slight particulars, we had no knowledge of his character and antecedents.

One dark winter night—it had struck nine some time before the landlord joined us—there was a sick man in the George, a great neighbouring proprietor suddenly struck down with apoplexy on his way to Parliament; and the great man's still greater London doctor had been telegraphed to his bedside. It was the first time that such a thing had happened in Debenham, for the railway was but newly open, and we were all proportionately moved by the occurrence.

"He's come," said the landlord, after he had filled and lighted his pipe.

"He?" said I. "Who?—not the doctor?"

"Himself," replied our host.

"What is his name?"

"Doctor Macfarlane," said the landlord.

Fettes was far through his third tumbler, stupidly fuddled, now nodding over, now staring mazily around him; but at the last word he seemed to awaken, and repeated the name "Macfarlane" twice, quietly enough the first time, but with sudden emotion at the second.

"Yes," said the landlord, "that's his name, Doctor Wolfe Macfarlane."

Fettes became instantly sober; his eyes awoke, his voice became clear, loud, and steady, his language forcible and earnest. We were all startled by the transformation, as if a man had arisen from the dead.

"I beg your pardon," he said, "I am afraid I have not been paying much attention to your talk. Who is this Wolfe Macfarlane?" And then, when he had heard the landlord out. "It cannot be, it cannot be," he added; "and yet I would like well to see him face to face."

"Do you know him, Doctor?" asked the undertaker, with a gasp.

"God forbid!" was the reply. "And yet the name is a strange one; it were too much to fancy two. Tell me, landlord, is he old?"

"Well," said the host, "he's not a young man, to be sure, and his hair is white; but he looks younger than you."

"He is older, though; years older. But," with a slap upon the table, "it's the rum you see in my face—rum and sin. This man, perhaps, may have an easy conscience and a good digestion. Conscience! Hear me speak. You would think I was some good, old, decent Christian, would you not? But no, not I; I never canted. Voltaire might have canted if he'd stood in my shoes; but the brains"—with a rattling fillip on his bald head—"the brains were clear and active, and I saw and made no deductions."

"If you know this doctor," I ventured to remark, after a somewhat awful pause, "I should gather that you do not share the landlord's good opinion."

Fettes paid no regard to me.

"Yes," he said, with sudden decision, "I must see him face to face."

There was another pause, and then a door was closed rather sharply on the first floor, and a step was heard upon the stair.

"That's the doctor," cried the landlord. "Look sharp, and you can catch him."

It was but two steps from the small parlour to the door of the old George Inn; the wide oak staircase landed almost in the street; there was room for a Turkey rug and nothing more between the threshold and the last round of the descent; but this little space was every evening brilliantly lit up, not only by the light upon the stair and the great signal-lamp below the sign, but by the warm radiance of the bar-room window. The George thus brightly advertised itself to passers-by on the cold street. Fettes walked steadily to the spot, and we, who were hanging behind, beheld the two men meet, as one of them had phrased it, face to face. Dr. Macfarlane was alert and vigorous. His white hair set off his pale and placid, although energetic, countenance. He was richly dressed in the finest of broadcloth and the whitest of linen, with a great gold watch-chain and studs and spectacles of the same precious material. He wore a broad-folded tie, white and speckled with lilac, and he carried on his arm a comfortable driving-coat of fur. There was no doubt but he became his years, breathing, as he did, of wealth and consideration; and it was a surprising contrast to see our parlour sot—bald, dirty, pimpled, and robed in his old camlet cloak—confront him at the bottom of the stairs.

"Macfarlane!" he said somewhat loudly, more like a herald than a friend.

The great doctor pulled up short on the fourth step, as though the familiarity of the address surprised and somewhat shocked his dignity.

"Toddy Macfarlane!" repeated Fettes.

The London man almost staggered. He stared for the swiftest of seconds at the man before him, glanced behind him with a sort of care, and then in a startled whisper, "Fettes!" he said, "you!"

"Ay," said the other, "me! Did you think I was dead too? We're not so easy shut of our acquaintance."

"Hush, hush!" exclaimed the doctor. "Hush, hush! this meeting is so unexpected—I can see you are unmanned. I hardly knew you, I confess, at first; but I am overjoyed—overjoyed to have this opportunity. For the present it must be how-d'ye-do and good-bye in one, for my fly is waiting, and I must not fail the train; but you shall—

let me see—yes—you shall give me your address, and you can count on early news of me. We must do something for you, Fettes. I fear you are out at elbows; but we must see to that for auld lang syne, as once we sang at suppers."

"Money!" cried Fettes; "money from you! The money that I had from you is lying where I cast it in the rain."

Dr. Macfarlane had talked himself into some measure of superiority and confidence, but the uncommon energy of this refusal cast him back into his first confusion.

A horrible, ugly look came and went across his almost venerable countenance. "My dear fellow," he said, "be it as you please; my last thought is to offend you. I would intrude on none. I will leave you my address, however—"

"I do not wish it—I do not wish to know the roof that shelters you," interrupted the other. "I heard your name; I feared it might be you; I wished to know if, after all, there were a God; I know now that there is none. Begone!"

He still stood in the middle of the rug, between the stair and doorway; and the great London physician, in order to escape, would be forced to step to one side. It was plain that he hesitated before the thought of this humiliation. White as he was, there was a dangerous glitter in his spectacles; but while he still paused uncertain, he became aware that the driver of his fly was peering in from the street at this unusual scene and caught a glimpse at the same time of our little body from the parlour, huddled by the corner of the bar. The presence of so many witnesses decided him at once to flee. He crouched together, brushing on the wainscot, and made a dart like a serpent, striking for the door. But his tribulation was not yet entirely at an end, for even as he was passing Fettes clutched him by the arm and these words came in a whisper, and yet painfully distinct, "Have you seen it again?"

The great rich London doctor cried out aloud with a sharp, throttling cry: he dashed his questioner across the open space, and, with his hands over his head, fled out of the door like a detected thief. Before it had occurred to one of us to make a movement the fly was already rattling toward the station. The scene was over like a dream but the dream had left proofs and traces of its passage. Next day the servant found the fine gold spectacles broken on the threshold, and

hat very night we were all standing breathless by the bar-room window, nd Fettes at our side, sober, pale, and resolute in look.

"God protect us, Mr. Fettes!" said the landlord, coming first into ossession of his customary senses. "What in the universe is all this? hese are strange things you have been saying."

Fettes turned toward us; he looked us each in succession in the face. See if you can hold your tongues," said he. "That man Macfarlane s not safe to cross; those that have done so already have repented it oo late."

And then, without so much as finishing his third glass, far less waiting for the other two, he bade us good-bye and went forth, under the amp of the hotel, into the black night.

We three turned to our places in the parlour, with the big red fire nd four clear candles; and as we recapitulated what had passed, the rst chill of our surprise soon changed into a glow of curiosity. We at late; it was the latest session I have known in the old George. ach man, before we parted, had his theory that he was bound to rove; and none of us had any nearer business in this world than to rack out the past of our condemned companion, and surprise the secret hat he shared with the great London doctor. It is no great boast, ut I believe I was a better hand at worming out a story than either f my fellows at the George; and perhaps there is now no other man live who could narrate to you the following foul and unnatural events.

In his young days Fettes studied medicine in the schools of Edinurgh. He had talent of a kind, the talent that picks up swiftly what it ears and readily retails it for its own. He worked little at home; but e was civil, attentive, and intelligent in the presence of his masters. hey soon picked him out as a lad who listened closely and remembered ell; nay, strange as it seemed to me when I first heard it, he was in hose days well favoured, and pleased by his exterior. There was, at hat period, a certain extra-mural teacher of anatomy, whom I shall here esignate by the letter K. His name was subsequently too well known. he man who bore it skulked through the streets of Edinburgh in disuise, while the mob that applauded at the execution of Burke called oudly for the blood of his employer. But Mr. K—— was then at the op of his vogue; he enjoyed a popularity due partly to his own talent nd address, partly to the incapacity of his rival, the university proessor. The students, at least, swore by his name, and Fettes believed

himself, and was believed by others, to have laid the foundations of success when he had acquired the favour of this meteorically famous man. Mr. K—— was a *bon vivant* as well as an accomplished teacher; he liked a sly illusion no less than a careful preparation. In both capacities Fettes enjoyed and deserved his notice, and by the second year of his attendance he held the half-regular position of second demonstrator or sub-assistant in his class.

In this capacity the charge of the theatre and lecture-room devolved in particular upon his shoulders. He had to answer for the cleanliness of the premises and the conduct of the other students, and it was a part of his duty to supply, receive, and divide the various subjects. It was with a view to this last—at that time very delicate—affair that he was lodged by Mr. K—— in the same wynd, and at last in the same building, with the dissecting-rooms. Here, after a night of turbulent pleasures, his hand still tottering, his sight still misty and confused, he would be called out of bed in the black hours before the winter dawn by the unclean and desperate interlopers who supplied the table. He would open the door to these men, since infamous throughout the land. He would help them with their tragic burden, pay them their sordid price, and remain alone, when they were gone, with the unfriendly relics of humanity. From such a scene he would return to snatch another hour or two of slumber, to repair the abuses of the night, and refresh himself for the labours of the day.

Few lads could have been more insensible to the impressions of a life thus passed among the ensigns of mortality. His mind was closed against all general considerations. He was incapable of interest in the fate and fortunes of another, the slave of his own desires and low ambitions. Cold, light, and selfish in the last resort, he had that modicum of prudence, miscalled morality, which keeps a man from inconvenient drunkenness or punishable theft. He coveted, besides, a measure of consideration from his masters and his fellow-pupils, and he had no desire to fail conspicuously in the external parts of life. Thus he made it his pleasure to gain some distinction in his studies, and day after day rendered unimpeachable eye-service to his employer, Mr. K——. For his day of work he indemnified himself by nights of roaring, blackguardly enjoyment; and when that balance had been struck, the organ that he called his conscience declared itself content.

The supply of subjects was a continual trouble to him as well as to

is master. In that large and busy class, the raw material of the natomists kept perpetually running out; and the business thus endered necessary was not only unpleasant in itself, but threatened angerous consequences to all who were concerned. It was the policy f Mr. K—— to ask no questions in his dealings with the trade. "They ring the body, and we pay the price," he used to say, dwelling on he alliteration—"*quid pro quo*." And, again, and somewhat profanely, Ask no questions," he would tell his assistants, "for conscience' sake." here was no understanding that the subjects were provided by the rime of murder. Had that idea been broached to him in words, he would have recoiled in horror; but the lightness of his speech upon o grave a matter was, in itself, an offence against good manners, and temptation to the men with whom he dealt. Fettes, for instance, ad often remarked to himself upon the singular freshness of the bodies. He had been struck again and again by the hang-dog, abominable looks f the ruffians who came to him before the dawn; and putting things ogether clearly in his private thoughts, he perhaps attributed a meaning oo immoral and too categorical to the unguarded counsels of his naster. He understood his duty, in short, to have three branches: to ake what was brought, to pay the price, and to avert the eye from any vidence of crime.

One November morning this policy of silence was put sharply to the est. He had been awake all night with a racking toothache—pacing is room like a caged beast or throwing himself in fury on his bed—nd had fallen at last into that profound, uneasy slumber that so often ollows on a night of pain, when he was awakened by the third or fourth ngry repetition of the concerted signal. There was a thin, bright noonshine; it was bitter cold, windy, and frosty; the town had not yet wakened, but an indefinable stir already preluded the noise and busi-ess of the day. The ghouls had come later than usual, and they eemed more than usually eager to be gone. Fettes, sick with sleep, ighted them upstairs. He heard their grumbling Irish voices through dream; and as they stripped the sack from their sad merchandise he eaned dozing, with his shoulder propped against the wall; he had to hake himself to find the men their money. As he did so his eyes ighted on the dead face. He started; he took two steps nearer, with he candle raised.

"God Almighty!" he cried. "That is Jane Galbraith!"

The men answered nothing, but they shuffled nearer the door.

"I know her, I tell you," he continued. "She was alive and heart yesterday. It's impossible she can be dead; it's impossible you shoul have got this body fairly."

"Sure, sir, you're mistaken entirely," said one of the men.

But the other looked Fettes darkly in the eyes, and demanded th money on the spot.

It was impossible to misconceive the threat or to exaggerate th danger. The lad's heart failed him. He stammered some excuses counted out the sum, and saw his hateful visitors depart. No soone were they gone than he hastened to confirm his doubts. By a dozen un questionable marks he identified the girl he had jested with the da before. He saw, with horror, marks upon her body that might wel betoken violence. A panic seized him, and he took refuge in his room There he reflected at length over the discovery that he had made; con sidered soberly the bearing of Mr. K——'s instructions and the dange to himself of interference in so serious a business, and at last, in sor perplexity, determined to wait for the advice of his immediate superior the class assistant.

This was a young doctor, Wolfe Macfarlane, a high favourite amon all the reckless students, clever, dissipated, and unscrupulous to th last degree. He had travelled and studied abroad. His manners wer agreeable and a little forward. He was an authority on the stage skilful on the ice or the links with skate or golf-club; he dressed witl nice audacity, and, to put the finishing touch upon his glory, he kept gig and a strong trotting-horse. With Fettes he was on terms of in timacy; indeed, their relative positions called for some community o life; and when subjects were scarce the pair would drive far into th country in Macfarlane's gig, visit and desecrate some lonely graveyard and return before dawn with their booty to the door of the dissecting room.

On that particular morning Macfarlane arrived somewhat earlier tha his wont. Fettes heard him, and met him on the stairs, told him hi story, and showed him the cause of his alarm. Macfarlane examined th marks on her body.

"Yes," he said with a nod, "it looks fishy."

"Well, what should I do?" asked Fettes.

"Do?" repeated the other. "Do you want to do anything? Least aid soonest mended, I should say."

"Someone else might recognise her," objected Fettes. "She was as ell known as the Castle Rock."

"We'll hope not," said Macfarlane, "and if anybody does—well, ou didn't, don't you see, and there's an end. The fact is, this has een going on too long. Stir up the mud, and you'll get K—— into he most unholy trouble; you'll be in a shocking box yourself. So will , if you come to that. I should like to know how any one of us ould look, or what the devil we should have to say for ourselves, in ny Christian witness-box. For me, you know, there's one thing cer- ain—that, practically speaking, all our subjects have been murdered."

"Macfarlane!" cried Fettes.

"Come now!" sneered the other. "As if you hadn't suspected it ourself!"

"Suspecting is one thing—"

"And proof another. Yes, I know; and I'm as sorry as you are this hould have come here," tapping the body with his cane. "The next est thing for me is not to recognise it; and," he added coolly, "I don't. ou may, if you please. I don't dictate, but I think a man of the world would do as I do; and I may add, I fancy that is what K—— would look for at our hands. The question is, Why did he choose us wo for his assistants? And I answer, because he didn't want old vives."

This was the tone of all others to affect the mind of a lad like ettes. He agreed to imitate Macfarlane. The body of the unfortu- nate girl was duly dissected, and no one remarked or appeared to ecognise her.

One afternoon, when his day's work was over, Fettes dropped into popular tavern and found Macfarlane sitting with a stranger. This vas a small man, very pale and dark, with coal-black eyes. The cut f his features gave a promise of intellect and refinement which was but eebly realised in his manners, for he proved, upon a nearer acquaint- nce, coarse, vulgar, and stupid. He exercised, however, a very re- narkable control over Macfarlane; issued orders like the Great Bashaw; ecame inflamed at the least discussion or delay, and commented rudely n the servility with which he was obeyed. This most offensive person ook a fancy to Fettes on the spot, plied him with drinks, and honoured

him with unusual confidences on his past career. If a tenth part of what he confessed were true, he was a very loathsome rogue; and the lad's vanity was tickled by the attention of so experienced a man.

"I'm a pretty bad fellow myself," the stranger remarked, "but Macfarlane is the boy—Toddy Macfarlane I call him. Toddy, order your friend another glass." Or it might be, "Toddy, you jump up and shut the door." "Toddy hates me," he said again. "Oh, yes, Toddy, you do!"

"Don't you call me that confounded name," growled Macfarlane.

"Hear him! Did you ever see the lads play knife? He would like to do that all over my body," remarked the stranger.

"We medicals have a better way than that," said Fettes. "When we dislike a dead friend of ours, we dissect him."

Macfarlane looked up sharply, as though this jest were scarcely to his mind.

The afternoon passed. Gray, for that was the stranger's name, invited Fettes to join them at dinner, ordered a feast so sumptuous that the tavern was thrown into commotion, and when all was done commanded Macfarlane to settle the bill. It was late before they separated: the man Gray was incapably drunk. Macfarlane, sobered by his fury, chewed the cud of the money he had been forced to squander and the slights he had been obliged to swallow. Fettes, with various liquors singing in his head, returned home with devious footsteps and a mind entirely in abeyance. Next day Macfarlane was absent from the class and Fettes smiled to himself as he imagined him still squiring the intolerable Gray from tavern to tavern. As soon as the hour of liberty had struck, he posted from place to place in quest of his last night's companions. He could find them, however, nowhere; so returned early to his rooms, went early to bed, and slept the sleep of the just.

At four in the morning he was awakened by the well-known signal. Descending to the door, he was filled with astonishment to find Macfarlane with his gig, and in the gig one of those long and ghastly packages with which he was so well acquainted.

"What?" he cried. "Have you been out alone? How did you manage?"

But Macfarlane silenced him roughly, bidding him turn to business. When they had got the body upstairs and laid it on the table, Macfarlane made at first as if he were going away. Then he paused and

seemed to hesitate; and then, "You had better look at the face," said he, in tones of some constraint. "You had better," he repeated, as Fettes only stared at him in wonder.

"But where, and how, and when did you come by it?" cried the other.

"Look at the face," was the only answer.

Fettes was staggered; strange doubts assailed him. He looked from the young doctor to the body, and then back again. At last, with a start, he did as he was bidden. He had almost expected the sight that met his eyes, and yet the shock was cruel. To see, fixed in the rigidity of death and naked on that coarse layer of sackcloth, the man whom he had left well clad and full of meat and sin upon the threshold of a tavern, awoke, even in the thoughtless Fettes, some of the terrors of the conscience. It was a *cras tibi* which re-echoed in his soul, that two whom he had known should have come to lie upon these icy tables. Yet these were only secondary thoughts. His first concern regarded Wolfe. Unprepared for a challenge so momentous, he knew not how to look his comrade in the face. He durst not meet his eye, and he had neither words nor voice at his command.

It was Macfarlane himself who made the first advance. He came up quietly behind and laid his hand gently but firmly on the other's shoulder.

"Richardson," said he, "may have the head."

Now, Richardson was a student who had long been anxious for that portion of the human subject to dissect. There was no answer, and the murderer resumed: "Talking of business, you must pay me; your accounts, you see, must tally."

Fettes found a voice, the ghost of his own: "Pay you!" he cried. "Pay you for that?"

"Why, yes, of course you must. By all means and on every possible account, you must," returned the other. "I dare not give it for nothing, you dare not take it for nothing; it would compromise us both. This is another case like Jane Galbraith's. The more things are wrong, the more we must act as if all were right. Where does old K—— keep his money?"

"There," answered Fettes hoarsely, pointing to a cupboard in the corner.

"Give me the key, then," said the other calmly, holding out his hand.

There was an instant's hesitation, and the die was cast. Macfarlane

could not suppress a nervous twitch, the infinitesimal mark of an immense relief, as he felt the key between his fingers. He opened the cupboard, brought out pen and ink and a paper-book that stood in one compartment, and separated from the funds in a drawer a sum suitable to the occasion.

"Now, look here," he said, "there is the payment made—first proof of your good faith; first step to your security. You have now to clinch it by a second. Enter the payment in your book, and then you for your part may defy the devil."

The next few seconds were for Fettes an agony of thought; but in balancing his terrors it was the most immediate that triumphed. Any future difficulty seemed almost welcome if he could avoid a present quarrel with Macfarlane. He set down the candle which he had been carrying all this time, and with a steady hand entered the date, the nature, and the amount of the transaction.

"And now," said Macfarlane, "it's only fair that you should pocket the lucre. I've had my share already. By-the-bye, when a man of the world falls into a bit of luck, has a few shillings extra in his pocket —I'm ashamed to speak of it, but there's a rule of conduct in the case. No treating, no purchase of expensive class-books, no squaring of old debts; borrow, don't lend."

"Macfarlane," began Fettes, still somewhat hoarsely, "I have put my neck in a halter to oblige you."

"To oblige me?" cried Wolfe. "Oh, come! You did, as near as I can see the matter, what you downright had to do in self-defence. Suppose I got into trouble, where would you be? This second little matter flows clearly from the first. Mr. Gray is the continuation of Miss Galbraith. You can't begin and then stop. If you begin, you must keep on beginning; that's the truth. No rest for the wicked."

A horrible sense of blackness and the treachery of fate seized hold upon the soul of the unhappy student.

"My God!" he cried, "but what have I done? and when did I begin? To be made a class assistant—in the name of reason, where's the harm in that? Service wanted the position; Service might have got it. Would *he* have been where *I* am now?"

"My dear fellow," said Macfarlane, "what a boy you are! What harm *has* come to you? What harm *can* come to you if you hold your tongue? Why, man, do you know what this life is? There are two

squads of us—the lions and the lambs. If you're a lamb, you'll come to lie upon these tables like Gray or Jane Galbraith; if you're a lion, you'll live and drive a horse like me, like K——, like all the world with any wit or courage. You're staggered at the first. But look at K——! My dear fellow, you're clever, you have pluck. I like you, and K—— likes you. You were born to lead the hunt; and I tell you, on my honour and my experience of life, three days from now you'll laugh at all these scarecrows like a High School boy at a farce."

And with that Macfarlane took his departure and drove off up the wynd in his gig to get under cover before daylight. Fettes was thus left alone with his regrets. He saw the miserable peril in which he stood involved. He saw, with inexpressible dismay, that there was no limit to his weakness, and that, from concession to concession, he had fallen from the arbiter of Macfarlane's destiny to his paid and helpless accomplice. He would have given the world to have been a little braver at the time, but it did not occur to him that he might still be brave. The secret of Jane Galbraith and the cursed entry in the day-book closed his mouth.

Hours passed; the class began to arrive; the members of the unhappy Gray were dealt out to one and to another, and received without remark. Richardson was made happy with the head; and before the hour of freedom rang, Fettes trembled with exultation to perceive how far they had already gone toward safety.

For two days he continued to watch, with increasing joy, the dreadful process of disguise.

On the third day Macfarlane made his appearance. He had been ill, he said; but he made up for lost time by the energy with which he directed the students. To Richardson in particular he extended the most valuable assistance and advice, and that student, encouraged by the praise of the demonstrator, burned high with ambitious hopes, and saw the medal already in his grasp.

Before the week was out Macfarlane's prophecy had been fulfilled. Fettes had outlived his terrors and had forgotten his baseness. He began to plume himself upon his courage, and had so arranged the story in his mind that he could look back on these events with an unhealthy pride. Of his accomplice he saw but little. They met, of course, in the business of the class; they received their orders together from Mr. K——. At times they had a word or two in private, and

Macfarlane was from first to last particularly kind and jovial. But it was plain that he avoided any reference to their common secret; and even when Fettes whispered to him that he had cast in his lot with the lions and forsworn the lambs, he only signed to him smilingly to hold his peace.

At length an occasion arose which threw the pair once more into a closer union. Mr. K—— was again short of subjects; pupils were eager, and it was a part of this teacher's pretensions to be always well supplied. At the same time there came the news of burial in the rustic graveyard of Glencorse. Time has little changed the place in question. It stood then, as now, upon a crossroad, out of call of human habitations, and buried fathom deep in the foliage of six cedar trees. The cries of the sheep upon the neighbouring hills, the streamlets upon either hand, one loudly singing among pebbles, the other dripping furtively from pond to pond, the stir of the wind in mountainous old flowering chestnuts, and once in seven days the voice of the bell and the old tunes of the precentor, were the only sounds that disturbed the silence around the rural church. The Resurrection Man—to use a byname of the period—was not to be deterred by any of the sanctities of customary piety. It was part of his trade to despise and desecrate the scrolls and trumpets of old tombs, the paths worn by the feet of worshippers and mourners, and the offerings and the inscriptions of bereaved affection. To rustic neighbourhoods, where love is more than commonly tenacious, and where some bonds of blood or fellowship unite the entire society of a parish, the body-snatcher, far from being repelled by natural respect, was attracted by the ease and safety of the task. To bodies that had been laid in earth, in joyful expectation of a far different awakening, there came that hasty, lamp-lit, terror-haunted resurrection of the spade and mattock. The coffin was forced, the cerements torn, and the melancholy relics, clad in sackcloth, after being rattled for hours on moonless byways, were at length exposed to uttermost indignities before a class of gaping boys.

Somewhat as two vultures may swoop upon a dying lamb, Fettes and Macfarlane were to be let loose upon a grave in that green and quiet resting-place. The wife of a farmer, a woman who had lived for sixty years, and been known for nothing but good butter and a godly conversation, was to be rooted from her grave at midnight and carried, dead and naked to that far-away city that she had always honoured

with her Sunday's best; the place beside her family was to be empty till the crack of doom; her innocent and almost venerable members to be exposed to that last curiosity of the anatomist.

Late one afternoon the pair set forth, well wrapped in cloaks and furnished with a formidable bottle. It rained without remission—a cold, dense, lashing rain. Now and again there blew a puff of wind, but these sheets of falling water kept it down. Bottle and all, it was a sad and silent drive as far as Penicuik, where they were to spend the evening. They stopped once, to hide their implements in a thick bush not far from the churchyard, and once again at the Fisher's Tryst, to have a toast before the kitchen fire and vary their nips of whisky with a glass of ale. When they reached their journey's end the gig was housed, the horse was fed and comforted, and the two young doctors in a private room sat down to the best dinner and the best wine the house afforded. The lights, the fire, the beating rain upon the window, the cold, incongruous work that lay before them, added zest to their enjoyment of the meal. With every glass their cordiality increased. Soon Macfarlane handed a little pile of gold to his companion.

"A compliment," he said. "Between friends these little d——d accommodations ought to fly like pipelights."

Fettes pocketed the money, and applauded the sentiment to the echo. "You are a philosopher," he cried. "I was an ass till I knew you. You and K—— between you, by the Lord Harry! but you'll make a man of me."

"Of course we shall," applauded Macfarlane. "A man? I tell you, it required a man to back me up the other morning. There are some big, brawling, forty-year-old cowards who would have turned sick at the look of the d——d thing; but not you—you kept your head. I watched you."

"Well, and why not?" Fettes thus vaunted himself. "It was no affair of mine. There was nothing to gain on the one side but disturbance, and on the other I could count on your gratitude, don't you see?" And he slapped his pocket till the gold pieces rang.

Macfarlane somehow felt a certain touch of alarm at these unpleasant words. He may have regretted that he had taught his young companion so successfully, but he had no time to interfere, for the other noisily continued in this boastful strain:

"The great thing is not to be afraid. Now, between you and me, I

to be heard except the rain, now marching to the wind, now steadily falling over miles of open country.

They were so nearly at an end of their abhorred task that they judged it wisest to complete it in the dark. The coffin was exhumed and broken open; the body inserted in the dripping sack and carried between them to the gig; one mounted to keep it in its place, and the other, taking the horse by the mouth, groped along by wall and bush until they reached the wider road by the Fisher's Tryst. Here was a faint, diffused radiancy, which they hailed like daylight; by that they pushed the horse to a good pace and began to rattle along merrily in the direction of the town.

They had both been wetted to the skin during their operations, and now, as the gig jumped among the deep ruts, the thing that stood propped between them fell now upon one and now upon the other. At every repetition of the horrid contact each instinctively repelled it with the greater haste; and the process, natural although it was, began to tell upon the nerves of the companions. Macfarlane made some ill-favoured jest about the farmer's wife, but it came hollowly from his lips, and was allowed to drop in silence. Still their unnatural burden humped from side to side; and now the head would be laid, as if in confidence, upon their shoulders, and now the drenching sackcloth would flap icily about their faces. A creeping chill began to possess the soul of Fettes. He peered at the bundle, and it seemed somehow larger than at first. All over the country-side, and from every degree of distance, the farm dogs accompanied their passage with tragic ululations; and it grew and grew upon his mind that some unnatural miracle had been accomplished, that some nameless change had befallen the dead body, and that it was in fear of their unholy burden that the dogs were howling.

"For God's sake," said he, making a great effort to arrive at speech, "for God's sake, let's have a light!"

Seemingly Macfarlane was affected in the same direction; for, though he made no reply, he stopped the horse, passed the reins to his companion, got down, and proceeded to kindle the remaining lamp. They had by that time got no farther than the cross-road down to Auchenclinny. The rain still poured as though the deluge were returning, and it was no easy matter to make a light in such a world of wet and darkness. When at last the flickering blue flame had been transferred to the

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wick and began to expand and clarify, and shed a wide circle of misty brightness round the gig, it became possible for the two young men to see each other and the thing they had along with them. The rain had moulded the rough sacking to the outlines of the body underneath; the head was distinct from the trunk, the shoulders plainly modelled; something at once spectral and human riveted their eyes upon the ghastly comrade of their drive.

For some time Macfarlane stood motionless, holding up the lamp. A nameless dread was swathed, like a wet sheet, about the body, and tightened the white skin upon the face of Fettes; a fear that was meaningless, a horror of what could not be, kept mounting to his brain. Another beat of the watch, and he had spoken. But his comrade forestalled him.

"That is not a woman," said Macfarlane, in a hushed voice.

"It was a woman when we put her in," whispered Fettes.

"Hold that lamp," said the other. "I must see her face."

And as Fettes took the lamp his companion untied the fastenings of the sack and drew down the cover from the head. The light fell very clear upon the dark, well-moulded features and smooth-shaven cheeks of a too familiar countenance, often beheld in dreams of both of these young men. A wild yell rang up into the night; each leaped from his own side into the roadway: the lamp fell, broke, and was extinguished: and the horse, terrified by this unusual commotion, bounded and went off toward Edinburgh at a gallop, bearing along with it, sole occupant of the gig, the body of the dead and long-dissected Gray.

THE END

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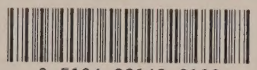

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